

A SPECIAL EDITION ON THE BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF IMAM MAHDI (A.J)

AL-TAWHID

AN INQUIRY CONCERNING AL-MAHDI

THE LAST LUMINARY

GLIMPSES OF AL-MAHDI (A.J)

TRADITIONS OF THE AHL-E-SUNNAH IN REGARDS TO THE MAHDI(A.J)

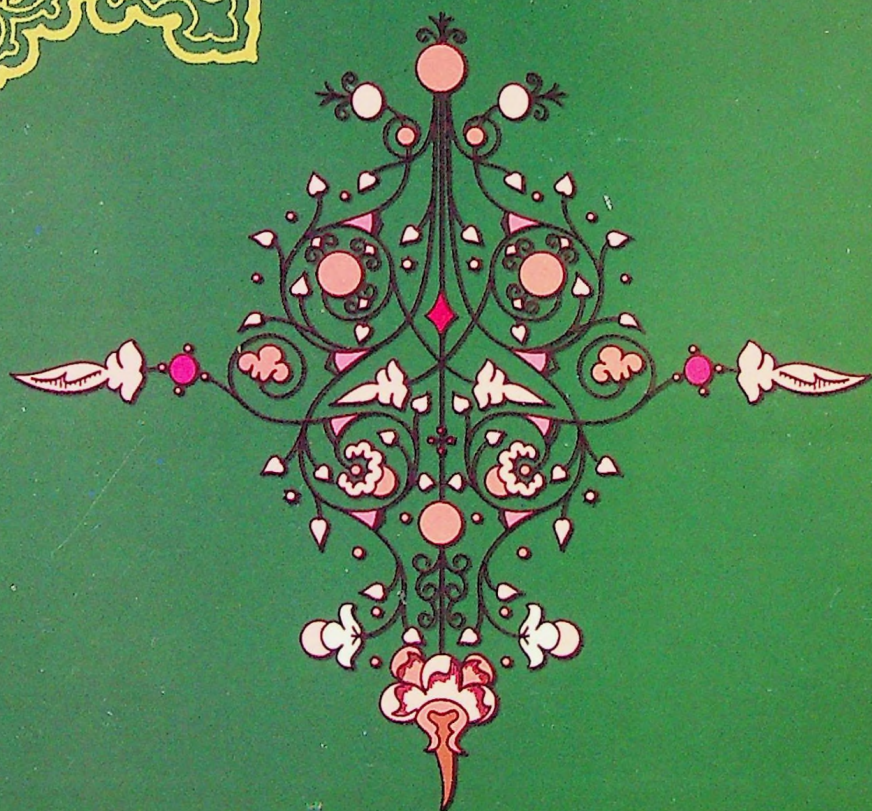
THE END OF DARKNESS

PRAYING FOR THE EARLY REAPPEARANCE OF IMAM MAHDI(A.J)

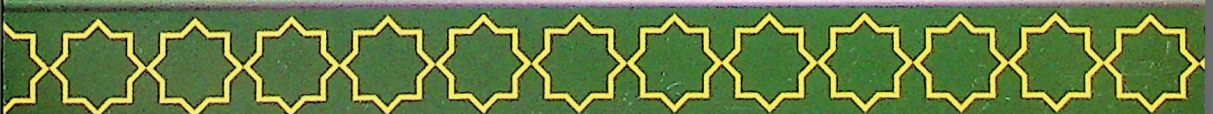


SHA' BAN 1424 (SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2003)





ISLAMIC THOUGHT FOUNDATION



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Al-Tawhid

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Contents:

A Special Edition

AN INQUIRY CONCERNING AL-MAHDI.....2

By: Shaheed Mohammed Baqir as-Sadr

THE LAST LUMINARY.....47

GLIMPSES OF AL-MAHDI (A.J).....55

**TRADITIONS OF THE AHL-E-SUNNAH IN
REGARDS TO THE MAHDI (A.J).....106**

THE END OF DARKNESS.....132

**PRAYING FOR THE EARLY REAPPEARANCE OF
IMAM MAHDI (A.J).....164**

Compiled By: Z. O'Doibhilin

A Special Edition

Awaiting the Savior

The month of Sha'ban the month when the savior of mankind was born, and may the materialization of his reappearance be soon so as to wipe out the cloud of darkness in the form of oppression that is engulfing the world.

Due to this occasion we here at Al-Tawhid have published a special edition of our periodical in anniversary of our Awaited Savior and Reformer.

The belief in an expected savior and a reformer of humanity is not peculiar to the Shi'a school of Islam. It is common not only to all the Muslim sects, but is also shared by all the great religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. In this quest for the truth about the Mahdi (A.J), there is no distinction of any caste, creed, or country. The quest is universal, just as the Mahdi (A.J) himself is universal. He stands resplendent high above the narrow walls in which humanity is cut up and divided. He belongs to everybody.

It is our wish that the following articles will be of great benefit to our readers and will raise those slightest doubts that we might have harboring in the back of our minds.

The Staff of Al-Tawhid
Sha'ban 1424 (September-October 2003)

AN INQUIRY CONCERNING AL-MAHDI

By: Shaheed Mohammed Baqir as-Sadr

INTRODUCTION

Not only is al-Mahdi (the Guided One) a materialization of an Islamic belief of a spiritual nature, but a model to a particular goal which humanity has been striving to achieve, as well as a form to a natural inspiration, through which people came to realize - in spite of their different faith and means of access to the unseen - that there is an appointed day on earth, when the Divine messages will be fulfilled in all their great significance and final aim, when the exhausting march

which humanity took in the course of history will lead to stability and security, after a long struggle.

However, the awareness of this expected future is not limited to those who believe in the unseen from a religious angle, but it has extended to others and has even been reflected in those ideologies which strongly denied the existence of the unseen and any of its aspects, such as dialectical materialism, that interpreted history in terms of contradictions, but at last admitted the fact that there was an appointed time in which these contradictions would be resolved when peace and harmony would prevail on earth.

Thus we find that the psychological experience of this awareness, which humanity has undertaken in the course of time, is one of the widest and most commonly held among people. So, if religion strengthens this awareness by reaffirming that at the end of matter, the earth will be filled with justice after having been filled with injustice and tyranny, it is in reality providing it with its objective value and turning it into a decisive belief in human destiny, which is not only a source of consolation but of generosity and strength.

A source of generosity, since belief in al-Mahdi is in reality belief in the protest against all forms of oppression and tyranny although they still prevail in the world.

It is also a source of strength and a refutation that cannot dwindle, since it is a ray of light that is continually struggling against despair within people and keeping the flame of hope ablaze within

their hearts in spite of the gloomy conditions and the might of oppression under which they live. because the appointed day confirms the fact that justice can challenge a world filled with transgression and tyranny. that it can shake its foundations, and rebuild it anew: that oppression is only an unnatural condition. regardless of its power and extent in the different corners of the world. That it will eventually be defeated: that the ultimate defeat of oppression while on the summit of its glory. brings great hope before every persecuted individual and every oppressed nation. in tipping the balance and rebuilding the world.

If the idea of al-Mahdi is older and wider than Islam. the detailed outlines. which the latter has fixed for it. have proved more satisfactory to all those ambitions that have been seeking its realization since the dawn of history as well as a more generous gift and a stronger prediction for the feelings of those who have been persecuted and oppressed in the course of history. This is because Islam has turned the idea from the unseen into reality. and from an aspiration for a savior the world would produce in the distant and unknown future into the conviction that he actually exists looking forward with other people to that day and the right circumstances that would make it possible for him to assume his great role.

Thus. al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) is no longer an idea waiting to be materialized nor a prophecy that needs to be substantiated. but a living reality and a particular person. living among

us in flesh and blood, who is sharing our hopes, suffering, sorrows and joys, actually witnessing all the sufferings, sadness and transgression that exist on the surface of the earth, who is affected with all this from near or far, who is waiting for the appropriate moment when he can stretch his hands to every oppressed and needy person and eradicate the tyrants.

However, it has been decreed that this expected leader is not to reveal anything concerning his life or person to other people, although he is living amongst them, waiting for the appointed moment.

It is obvious that thinking in terms of these Islamic indications narrows the gap of the unseen between the oppressed people and the expected savior and reduces the psychological distance between him and them, no matter how long the expectation may last.

So, when we are supposed, as far as we are concerned, to consider the idea of al-Mahdi as actually designating a particular living person who is observing events like we are, it is to inspire us with the fact that the idea of the unconditional protest against all sorts of transgression and tyranny, which al-Mahdi stands for, has already materialized in the expected dissident leader who will emerge, paying no homage to the transgressors, as it has been mentioned in the hadith (tradition), and that by believing in him we are in reality believing in this unyielding and living protest and participating in it.

Indeed lots of hadith (traditions) are constantly urging those who believe in al-Mahdi to expect release from suffering and be

prepared for his coming, which is a consolidation of that spiritual bond and emotional tie between them and the dissident leader and every value he stands for both of which could not have existed had he not actually materialized as a contemporary living person.

Thus we come to realize that this materialization has given a new impetus to the idea and made it a source of strength and generosity of a higher degree in terms of what any dissident individual finds of comfort consolation and relief from the pains that he has to suffer under tyranny and deprivation, when he comes to feel that his Imam and leader shares them with him, since the latter is a contemporary person and not an idea to be realized in the future.

However, the above mentioned materialization has led many people, who found it hard to believe or assume, to take negative attitudes even regarding the idea of al-Mahdi.

Since they all wonder if the idea of al-Mahdi actually designates a living person who has coexisted with all these consecutive generations for more than ten centuries, who will continue to do so until the time comes for him to emerge on the surface, how can such a human being live all this long and yet be immune from the laws of nature which compel any person to pass by the phase of old age and decrepitude and from there to his death. Is not such a matter impossible from an existential point of view?

Also, why should Allah show all this desire for this particular person - for whom the laws of nature would be obstructed - and

endeavors to prolong his life and reserve him for the appointed day. Has humanity become barren from yielding capable leaders? Why should not that day come when a leader will be born at its dawn and grow up like anyone else and gradually assume his role until the earth is filled with justice after having been filled with injustice and transgression?

They also wonder if 'al-Mahdi is the name of a particular person, who is the son of the eleventh Imam of the family of the Prophet (Ahlul-Bayt - peace and blessing of Allah be upon them), born in the year 256 A.H. whose father died in the year 260 A.H. This means that he was very young when his father died, not exceeding the age of five, which is too early for him to have completed his religious and intellectual education at the hands of his father. Therefore how and by what means could he personally be prepared to assume that great role from religious, intellectual and scientific angles.

Moreover, if the leader is ready why should he wait all these hundreds of years? Is not what the world has witnessed of afflictions and social disasters enough to justify his appearance on its surface for the establishing of justice on earth? They also wonder how can we believe in his existence even if we were to assume that this could be possible? Can anybody admit the validity of a hypothesis of this kind when it is not actually supported by any conclusive legal or scientific evidence? Should some narratives (hadith) related to the Prophet (blessing and peace of Allah be upon him and his progeny), of which

we doubt the authenticity be enough for us to approve such a hypothesis?

As far as the role that this individual is going to play on the appointed day is concerned they wonder how a single person can assume this great decisive role in the world, while we know that however great an individual is, he cannot create history nor lead it into a new phase: whereas the seeds of any historical movement ripen under certain objective circumstances and their coming together. And the sublimity of the individual is the factor, which selects him to shape these objective circumstances and provide the required solutions?

They also wonder how we can imagine what this individual would achieve of enormous change and decisive victory for justice and its message against the realities of injustice, oppression and tyranny in spite of what they have of power and influence and what they possess of means of destruction as well as what they have achieved of high standards in scientific, political, social and military capabilities.

Questions in this connection recur often in one form or another, however the true motives behind them are not only intellectual, since they have also a psychological source expressed in terms of the fear that dominates the world and the meagerness of all opportunity of change from the roots. Therefore, doubts deepen and questions increase, the more one becomes aware of the harsh reality that has prevailed in the world in the course of time. Thus failure, meagerness and the weakness that the human being is subject to lead him to feel

under a psychological pressure whenever he attempts to imagine the tremendous change of the world which would relieve it of its contradictions and historical oppression and would provide it with a new structure based on justice and truth. This pressure makes the individual doubt the whole concept of change and leads him to refuse it for one reason or another.

As far as we are concerned, we are going to deal with all these questions in sequence answering each one briefly due to the limits provided by these pages.

HOW WAS THIS LONG LIFE GRANTED TO AL-MAHDI

In other words, is it possible for a man to live for many centuries, as is the case with the Expected Leader, for the change of the world, whose age must be actually one thousand one hundred and forty years, or fourteen times the average age of an ordinary person who would pass through the phases of life from childhood to old age normally.

The word possibility here has one of the three following meanings, namely, practical possibility, scientific possibility and philosophical or logical possibility. I mean by practical possibility that a task is feasible in a manner that enables me, you or a third person to perform it, such as taking a journey across the ocean, reaching the depth of the sea or going to the moon, all of which are practically possible since they have actually been performed by people in one way

or another. By scientific possibility I mean that there are some tasks that neither I nor you nor a third person can practically perform with the means that are accessible to present civilization. However there is nothing in the alterable trends of science, which can indicate a justification for the rejection of the possibility of these tasks and their occurrence conforming to certain special circumstances and means. For example, there is nothing in science that could deny the possibility of traveling to Venus, because all its existing trends indicate the possibility of such a task, although that is still not possible for me or you since the difference between going to the moon and traveling to Venus is only one of degree. The latter representing a stage of overcoming some relative difficulties stemming from the fact that the distance is longer. From this we deduce that it is scientifically possible to travel to Venus even if it is still not feasible from a practical angle.

Contrary to that is the idea of traveling to the sun in distant space since it is scientifically impossible, meaning that science would never entertain the possibility of this task, for one cannot assume scientifically or empirically the possibility of inventing that preventive armor that could protect the body against the heat of the sun which is like an enormous kiln constantly burning with a degree impossible to imagine.

By logical or philosophical possibility I mean that there is nothing in the intellect, conforming to what it knows of previous laws - (preceding the experiment) - that could justify the rejection of a task

nor decide that it could not occur. Say, for example. the grouping of three oranges into two equal parts, this is logically impossible, since the intellect knows - before carrying out such an experiment - that three is an odd number, thus it is impossible to divide it into two equal parts, first it would turn into an even number, which would be a contradiction, which is impossible in logic.

But if a man were to be exposed to fire, or if he were to go to the sun without burning, that would not be impossible from a logical point of view. since there is no contradiction in the assumption that heat does not penetrate into a body of lower temperature from one of higher temperature.

That would only run contrary to the experiment, which proved that heat actually penetrates into a body of lower temperature from one of higher temperature until both bodies get an equal temperature.

Therefore, we come to realize that logical possibility has a wider scope than scientific possibility and that the latter is wider than practical possibility. There is no doubt about the logical possibility of the prolongation of human life for some thousands of years. because that is not impossible from an abstract intellectual point of view. also there is no contradiction in an assumption of this sort. since life as it is understood does not fathom sudden death and no one can dispute this fact.

Also, there is no doubt or controversy that this prolonged life is not possible from the practical aspect. as is the case in going down to

the depths of the ocean or ascending to the moon. That is because science with what it owns of modern means and instruments, that were made available by concomitant human experiments, cannot prolong human life for hundreds of years. this is why we find that even those among people who are more eager about life and more able to utilize scientific possibilities can only live to the extent of what is usual.

As far as scientific possibility is concerned, there is nothing in science, nowadays which could justify the denial of that fact from a theoretical point of view. This inquiry is in reality related to the nature of the physiological interpretation of the phenomenon of old-age and decrepitude among people. Does this phenomenon indicate a natural law that compels the tissues of the human body and its cells to harden gradually and become less efficient in the performance of their task once they have reached the summit of their growth, until they die at a particular moment, even if we were to isolate them from the influence of some external failure? Or is this hardening of the bodily tissues and cells and the lack of efficiency in the performance of their physiological tasks a result of their struggle against certain external factors, such as microbes or poison that penetrate the body from an excess in food or from the heavy work that the person might perform or any other factor.

Now this is the question that science has to find an answer to, yet many answers present themselves on a scientific level in this respect. If we are to consider the scientific point of view that tends to

interpret old-age and the weakness that goes with it, as a result of reactions against some external factors, it means that it is theoretically possible, once we have isolated the tissues that compose the body from these influences, to prolong life to the extent of surpassing the phenomenon of old-age and even overcoming it.

On the other hand, if we consider the other point of view which sees old-age as a natural process with regards to the living tissues and cells, it will mean that they bear within themselves the seed of their own ultimate death, once the phase of old-age has been completed.

I say: If we take this point of view into consideration it should not mean that there is no flexibility in this natural law, rather the assumption of its existence shows that it is in fact flexible. Since we find in our everyday life, in addition to what has been found by scientists through the experiments that they carry out in their laboratories, that old-age as a physiological phenomenon has no fixed time, since a man can be very old and yet possess tender limbs, with no trace of old-age appearing on him as has been mentioned by some doctors. Moreover some scientists take advantage of this flexibility and prolong the life of some animals by a hundred times their natural age, by creating certain circumstances and factors that delay the process of old age.

Thus it has been proved scientifically that this process can be postponed, by creating specific circumstances and factors, even if this experiment has not been carried out by science on a particular

complicated creature such as the human being, owing to the difference in the difficulty of carrying it out on the human being and other organisms.

This means that, from a theoretical point of view, science, with all its alterable orientations, has never had any objection to the prolongation of human life, whether old-age has been interpreted as the product of a struggle and close contact with some external influences, or as a result of a natural process of the cells and tissues that leads them towards their death. Thus we deduce that the prolongation of human life and its survival over many centuries is possible logically as well as scientifically but it is still impossible from a practical angle, and that nevertheless scientific progress has a long way to go before realizing this possibility.

In light of what has been discussed we shall deal with the age of al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) and what has been surrounding it of wonder and surprise. Thus we notice that since the possibility of this prolonged life has been confirmed both logically and scientifically, science is in the process of gradually transforming the theoretical possibility into a practical one. There is no room left for wonder except the remoteness of the probability that al-Mahdi might have preceded science in this transformation, before that the latter could have, in its evolutionary course, reached the standard of actual capacity for such a transformation, which would make him equal to that person who had preceded science in discovering the cure for cancer.

The question now is: How could Islam, which determined the age of the Expected Leader have preceded science in the field of this transformation? The answer is that this is not the only field in which Islam preceded science. Has the Islamic Shari'ah (revealed law) as a whole not come before science and the evolution of human thought by many centuries? Did it not promulgate certain symbols that submitted plans to be put into practice, which man could achieve only after hundreds of years of his independent activity? Did it not formulate certain regulations perfect in wisdom, the secrets of which were realized by man only after a certain length of time? Did the Divine message not reveal mysteries about the universe that could never have occurred to people's minds, which science came later to confirm and support?

So, if we are convinced by these facts why then should we regard as too much that the sender of this message - the Exalted - anticipates science in determining the age of al-Mahdi?

Here I mentioned only those aspects of precedence that we can notice in a direct manner, we can also include the aspects of precedence mentioned in the Divine message, for example, when it informs us about the night journey which the Prophet undertook from al-Harem Mosque to al-Aqsa Mosque. If we are to understand this journey within the frame of natural laws, we will find that it shows that these laws were utilized in a way that science could achieve only after hundreds of years.

Therefore, the same Divine knowledge which enabled the Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) to undertake this fast motion before science could achieve it, has also enabled his designated successors to have a prolonged life before science could realize such a project.

Certainly, this prolonged age that Allah, the Exalted, has bestowed on the Expected Savior may seem rather strange, if it is considered within the limits of the everyday in people's lives and what has been achieved by the experiments of scientists. But is the decisive and transformative role, which has been prepared for this Savior not strange within the limits of the ordinary in people's lives and what they have experienced of historical evolution? Has he not been entrusted with the task of changing the world and rebuilding its civilization on the basis of justice and truth? Why should we disapprove if the preparation of this great role is characterized by strange and unusual aspects, such as the prolongation of the Expected Leader's age? For this remoteness of those aspects and their unusual aspects, however great they are, cannot surpass the remoteness of the great role that has to be achieved on the appointed day? Therefore, if we approve the validity of that unique role from a historical angle in spite of the fact that there has never been in the history of humanity a role similar to it, why should not we also approve that prolonged age which is still unique in our ordinary life?

I wonder if it is a coincidence that only two individuals should carry out the task of emptying human civilization of its corrupt elements and rebuilding it, which means that they must have been of an excessive age many times superior to our ordinary lives. The first is Nuh (Noah) who had assumed his role in the humanity's past. The Qur'an mentioned that he had lived among his people for nine hundred and fifty years. His role was to reconstruct the world after the Great Flood.

The other one is al-Mahdi, who is to assume his role in the future, who has lived among his people until now for more than a thousand years. It has been ordained that he will reconstruct the world on the appointed day.

Why then should we accept Noah, who must have reached a thousand years at least, and yet reject al-Mahdi?

THE MIRACLE AND THE LONG LIFE

Up to now we have seen that the prolongation of life is scientifically possible. But let us suppose that it is not, that the process of old-age and decrepitude is quite rigid, that it cannot either now or in the long run overcome nor alter its conditions or circumstances.

What will this mean?

It will mean that the prolongation of human life - as is the case of Noah, or al-Mahdi - runs contrary to the natural laws which science confirmed thanks to modern instruments of experimentation. Thus this

condition becomes a miracle that has hindered the applicability of a natural law under a certain circumstances, in order to preserve the life of a particular individual whose role is to cherish the Divine message.

Yet this is not the only miracle of its kind, nor is it remote from a Muslim's faith, which derives from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Moreover the process of old age is no more rigid than is the process of the passage of heat from a body of higher temperature to another of lower temperature until both of them become equal. This had occurred in the case of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) when the only way to preserve his life was by hindering that process, when it was said to the fire in which he was thrown: *We said, "O fire be cool on Ibrahim and keep him safe."* (Qur'an, 21:69) So, he emerged from it safe and unharmed. There are also other cases where natural laws were hindered to protect some of the prophets or Proofs of Allah on earth. When the sea was split for Musa (Moses), when the Romans were misled in thinking they had caught 'Isa (Jesus) or when Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) left his house, while it was surrounded by the troops of Quraesh who were waiting for hours to attack him but Allah, the Exalted, hid him from their eyes while he was walking in their midst. All of these cases show a hindrance of the laws of nature to protect an individual, whom the Divine wisdom wished to preserve. Therefore, why not include here the process of old-age and decrepitude?

From this we can deduce a general notion, which is that whenever the preservation of the Prophet's life (the Proof of Allah on earth) depends on the hindrance of a natural law, and the prolongation of his life comes to be necessary for the performance of his task, Divine care then intervenes by delaying the process so that the task of that individual can be accomplished. On the other hand, once the Divine mission of that individual has been fulfilled he either dies naturally or as a martyr depending on what is determined by natural laws.

Thus we find ourselves confronted with the present question in connection with this general notion: How can the process be obstructed? How can the necessary correlation that exists between natural phenomena, be sundered? Does it not contradict science, which discovered the existence of that natural law or process and defined that necessary correlation on experimental and deductive bases? The answer is that science has already solved the problem by giving up the idea of necessity as far as natural laws are concerned. To clarify this we can say that science discovers natural laws through systematic observations and experiments.

For example, when the occurrence of a natural phenomenon is followed by another one, we deduce from this a natural law, which is: that whenever the first phenomenon comes into existence it is automatically followed by another phenomenon.

However, science does not propose a necessary correlation between the two phenomena stemming from their nature, since necessity is an invisible condition that experimentation and the instruments of scientific and inductive inquiry cannot demonstrate. Therefore, the logic of modern science emphasizes that natural law - as it is defined by science - does not indicate a necessary correlation, but an uninterrupted connection, between two phenomena. But when the miracle occurs and separates one from the other, it does not mean that their correlation was sundered. The truth of the matter is that the miracle, in its religious sense, has become, in the light of modern scientific logic, more understandable than before, under the classical view of causal correlation. This old view assumed that every two phenomena, in which the other follows one automatically, must have a necessary correlation, which means that it is impossible to separate one from the other. However, this correlation has been transformed thanks to modern scientific logic into a law of correlation or of consecutive succession between two phenomena without the hypothesis of invisible necessity.

Thereby the miracle becomes an exceptional condition with regard to this connective succession without running against a necessity or leading to impossibility. So, in the light of the logical foundation of induction we agree with the modern point of view, which says that induction does not demonstrate the existence of a necessary correlation between two phenomena. We find that it shows that there is

a common interpretation for the consecutive connection between the two. Since this common interpretation can be formed on the basis of the assumption of subjective necessity, it can also be formed on the assumption of a wisdom that made the Creator of the universe to continuously combine some particular phenomena with others. The same wisdom sometimes calls for exception; thus a miracle occurs.

WHY ALL THIS DESIRE TO PROLONG HIS LIFE

Now we should deal with the second question, which is: Why should Allah, the Exalted, show all this desire for this person in particular? Why should the natural laws be hindered just to prolong his life? Why should the leadership of the appointed day not be left to a person born in the future, who will appear then and assume his expected role? In other words: What is the use of this long absence and what is the motive behind it?

Indeed many people ask these questions, yet at the same time none of them is prepared to accept the Divine answer for them. However we believe that the twelve Imams form a unique group of individuals, none of whom could be substituted. But these people require a social interpretation of the situation, in the light of tangible realities, for the great operation of change and the understandable requirements for the appointed day. On these bases, we will temporarily disregard the characteristics that we believe should be fulfilled in the infallible Imams and ask the following questions: As far

as the expected operation of change, of the appointed day, is concerned and as far as it is understandable in the light of the norms and the experiences of life. can we consider the prolonged age of its preserved leader as one of the factors for its success?

And of his ability to lead it in a better way? We can give an affirmative answer to this question because of many reasons among which are the following:

First, that the great operation of change requires from its leader a unique psychological attitude, filled with a sense of success and a sense of the insignificance of the mighty existence which he has been prepared to struggle against and transform into a new civilized world. Thus the more the leader's heart is filled with the triviality of the civilization he is fighting, and the clearer is his sense that it is no more than a speck of dust on the long path of human civilization, the more he is ready from a psychological angle, to oppose, resist and persevere in his efforts against it until victory is achieved. It is clear, therefore, that the scope required from this psychological attitude ought to be proportionate to the size of change to be brought about and what needs to be rooted out of civilization and existence. So, whenever the opposition is to a mightier existence and a loftier and deeply rooted civilization, the greater is the thrust required from this psychological attitude. Since the message of the appointed day is to change, in a comprehensive way, a world filled with injustice and tyranny, it is therefore natural that it is looking for an individual whose

psychological attitude is superior to that whole world; a person whose age exceeds those who were born in that world and who were brought up in the shade of its civilization which he is to destroy and replace with one based on justice and truth. For whoever is brought up in a deeply-rooted civilization, that dominates the world with its values and modes of thinking, would be overwhelmed by it, since he would have been born while it had been in existence, and opened his eyes just to see its different aspects, and would have been brought up under its power and influence. Unlike that is a person who has deeply penetrated history, who has come to life long before that civilization which completes the cycle of the story of humanity before the appointed day saw the light. He sees it as little seeds, hardly visible, then gradually growing and taking roots within human societies, waiting for the right moment to blossom and appear. Then he witnesses it, as it starts to grow and advance, sometimes relapsing, sometimes meeting with success, then when it begins to prosper and become gigantic, gradually dominating the destinies of the world, such a man who has lived through all these stages with sagacity and caution, watching this giant - (against which he has to struggle) under that long historical perspective which he has lived in reality, and not just read about in books of history, such an individual would consider it as a definite destiny, unlike Jean Jacques Rousseau's consideration of the monarchy in France, when he was terrified at the mere imagining of France without a king, in spite of the fact that he was one of the heralds, both

intellectually and philosophically, of the evolution of the political situation that existed in those times. That was because Rousseau lived in the shade and under the influence of the monarchy.

On the other hand this individual who has thoroughly penetrated history, would have the dignity and strength of history and a powerful sense that all that surrounds him of civilization and existence was born at a certain time in history, when the way was paved for its existence, that it would disappear to the extent that nothing of it would remain as when there was nothing of it before it came into existence in the distant or near past, that the historical life spans of any civilization, however long they may be, are only limited days in the long era of history.

Have you not read the chapter of the cave in the Qur'an (surah al-Kahf)? Have you not read of those youths who believed in their Lord, whom Allah increased in guidance, who opposed a ruling pagan existence that was ruthless and did not hesitate to suppress every single seed of *Tawhid* (Unity of Allah), so that it might not rise above the level of idolatry? So these youths became depressed to the point of despair, once the windows of hope had been closed before their eyes; so they sought refuge in the cave, where they begged Allah for a solution to their problem after having exhausted all the possibilities. For they could not tolerate the fact that falsehood was ruling, transgressing and subjugating the truth and suppressing anyone whose heart showed an inclination towards the truth. Do you know what

Allah did to them? He made them sleep for three hundred and nine years in that cave and caused them to rise up from their long sleep and sent them to the outside world. after that the existence which had bewildered them with its power and transgression had collapsed and became a chapter in history that could frighten no one nor activate anything. They were brought out so that they could see all this with their own eyes and learn that falsehood is insignificant.

Indeed if this clear vision had been true in the case of the people of the cave, with all that it bore of psychological loftiness and thrust out of that unique event which prolonged their age by three hundred years. then the same event could occur in the case of al-Mahdi, the Expected Leader, whose extended age would make him see the giant as a dwarf, the tall tree as a seed and the hurricane as a breeze. Add to this that the experience that is granted by the concomitants of those consecutive civilizations and the direct confrontation with all their movements and changes. has a great influence on the intellectual preparation and the deepening of experience of the Expected Leader, since it puts him face to face with the many various practices of others. with all they contain of weakness and strength, and the different aspects of their errors and accuracy. And this enables him to classify the social symptoms with a complete awareness of their causes and their historical circumstances.

Moreover the preserved operation of change, which is the task of the Expected Leader, is founded on a particular message, namely the

message of Islam. Therefore, it is natural that in this case, the required leadership should be more proximate with the original sources of Islam, that his personality be fully shaped in an independent way, free from the influence of that civilization which is subject to his struggle on the appointed day, unlike that individual who would have been born and brought up in its atmosphere, whose intellect and feelings would have blossomed within its frame. Quite often such a person cannot free himself from the effects and residues of that civilization, even if he were to lead a movement of change against it.

Thus, in order that the preserved leader be not influenced by the civilization he has been prepared to transform, it is necessary that his personality should be fully shaped during a previous stage of civilization, as near as possible to the universal spirit, and in terms of the principles of that civilized condition, which the appointed day is aiming at realizing under his leadership.

HOW WAS THE PREPARATION OF THE EXPECTED LEADER ACHIEVED?

Now we have reached the third question which is: How could the preparation of the Expected Leader be achieved, while we know that he only remained five years with his father, al-Imam al-'Askari - which is a period of childhood not sufficient for the maturity of his personality. Therefore, under what circumstances has this achievement taken place?

The answer is: That al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) was appointed as a successor to his father, for the leadership of the Muslims, which means that he was an Imam in the fullest intellectual and spiritual sense of the word in a very early age of his noble life. Moreover, the early Imamate (leadership) is a previous phenomenon in the case of his forefathers (peace be upon them all), for example, al-Imam Muhammad son of 'Ali al-Jawad (peace be upon him). We call it a phenomenon because it has given in the case of al-Mahdi's forefathers (peace be upon them), a perceptible and a practical meaning, which the Muslims have lived and been aware of, in all their experiences with the Imams, in one way or another. Therefore, we cannot claim the proof of a clearer and wider phenomenon than the experience of a whole community. So, we can clarify the issue in the following points:

- 1) The leadership of the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (descendants of the Prophet) has never been one of the centers of influence and power that are transmitted through inheritance, from father to son, with the full support of the ruling regime, as was the case, in the leadership of Fatimid caliphs and the 'Abbasids; but it has always won the good will of its wider popular bases, on the grounds of their intellectual and spiritual conviction about the worth of the Imamate for the leadership of Islam.
- 2) These popular bases have existed since the dawn of Islam and became wider during the times of the two Imams, al-Baqir and

as-Sadiq (peace be upon them). The school that these two Imams led within the boundaries of these bases formed a very wide trend that stretched all over the world of Islam, bringing together hundreds of jurists (*fuqaha'*) theologians (*mutakallimun*) and commentators (*mufasssirin*) on the Qur'an and the learned in the different branches of Islamic and human sciences that were predominant in those times, to the extent that al-Hasan son of 'Ali al-Washsha said, "I went into al-Kufah Mosque and found nine hundred sheikhs all of them were saying, 'Ja'far son of Muhammad related to us . . .'"

- 3) This school and what it represented of popular bases from Islamic society, had certain conditions which it believed in and abode by, in the appointment of the Imam and his suitability for the role because it believed that an individual cannot be appointed as Imam unless he is the most learned among the agnostic of his time.
- 4) That both this school and its popular bases were ready to give sacrifices, for the sake of their belief in the Imamate, since the latter was considered, in the opinion of the concomitant leadership, as a hostile line, even from an intellectual point of view. This was the reason that led the authorities to carry out several campaigns of purging and torture to the extent that many people were either killed or were put into prisons, while hundreds of them died in the darkness of the cells. This meant

that those who believed in the Imamate were ready to pay a lot, and the only instigation they had was their nearness to Allah.

- 5) The Imams these bases yielded to were not isolated from them, only when the authorities prosecuted them or sent them into exile. This is what we come to know through the narrators who related to us the events of each one among the twelve Imams, and on the one hand from what has been copied from the letters that they sent to their contemporaries and the trips that they took, and on the other hand from representatives that they dispatched to the different corners of the Islamic world, as well as the frequent visits that the Shi' ahs used to pay to their Imams in the holy city of Medina, when they went to the sacred lands for the performance of the holy rites of hajj. All of these factors show an uninterrupted interaction between the Imam and his popular bases, which stretched over the different parts of the world of Islam, with all their different classes including the learned as well as the others.
- 6) That the caliphate which was contemporary with the Imams (peace be upon them) used to consider their spiritual leadership as a great threat against its existence and its destiny. Because of that it deployed all of its efforts for the sake of disintegrating that leadership and bore a lot of negativism in that respect, sometimes appearing under the guise of cruelty and transgression when its security was at stake. The campaigns of

persecution and victimization were a permanent event with respect to the Imam, in spite of what that left behind of sadness and disgust among the Muslims and their supporters from the different classes of society.

If we take these six points into consideration knowing that they are all historical facts, it leaves no room for doubt, and we come out with the following result: That the phenomenon of the early Imamate was a fact and not an illusion. Because the Imam who emerges while still young and declares openly that he is the spiritual and the intellectual leader of the Muslim community as a whole, and whom that wide trend pledges its loyalty, must surely be in possession of a remarkable, let alone a very wide knowledge and agnosis and a very wide horizon as well as a proficiency in jurisdiction, exegesis and the articles of faith, otherwise the popular bases would not be convinced of his spiritual leadership. We should also bear in mind the fact that the Imams took certain positions that made the interaction with their bases possible and threw different lights on their way of life and personality.

Do you think then that a young child who declares his Imamate (spiritual leadership) and hoists out of it a flag for Islam, with the full knowledge of the masses among his popular bases who believe in him and are prepared to sacrifice their lives and security without taking the trouble to discover his condition, or without being incited by the phenomenon of the early Imamate to inquire about the validity of the situation and the establishment of the worth of this young Imam?

Now supposing that people did not attempt to assess the situation, would it then be possible that after days, months or even years, the whole affair would go unnoticed without its truth coming to the surface. although there has been a natural and constant interaction between the young Imam and the rest of the people? Is it rational that the worth of a young child's way of thinking and knowledge would not be obvious after this long interaction?

Therefore, if we assume that the popular bases of the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (descendants of the Prophet) were not able to discover the truth of the matter, why did the existing caliphate keep silent and did not attempt to find out, if it were for its benefit?

Nothing could have been easier for the authorities then if the Imam had been a child, quite immature in his education and way of thinking, the normal case in all children.

No plan would have been more successful than to present this child to his supporters (the Shi'a) and others and prove to them that he was not fit for the Imamate and the intellectual and spiritual leadership. If it is indeed difficult to convince people of a man in his forties or fifties, already in possession of a great deal of education for the role of the Imamate, there can be no difficulty in convincing them of the incapacity of an ordinary child for the same role, in the sense that the Shi'a know, regardless of his intelligence and awareness. All this would have been possible and easier than the complicated means of suppression and recklessness, which the authorities resorted to in these

times. The only explanation for the caliphate's hesitation in playing this card is that it realized that the early Imamate was a real phenomenon and not an invented idea. The truth is that it had realized the fact after it had attempted to play that card but failed. History relates to us many of these attempts and their failure, while it does not mention at all the occurrence of a situation in which the phenomenon of early Imamate was put into question, where the Imam was confronted with difficulties or complications which surpassed his ability or shook people's trust in him. This is what we mean when we said earlier that the early Imamate is a real phenomenon in the life of Ahlul-Bayt (descendants of the Prophet), moreover this phenomenon has similar roots and situations in the Divine heritage that stretched over all the messages and the Divine leadership. It is enough to cite one example of an early leadership of Ahlul-Bayt (peace be upon them) in the case of Yahya (peace be upon him) when Allah said: *"O Yahya take the Book with strength," and We have given him wisdom when he was young.* (Qur'an, 19:12)

Now that the early leadership has been proved as an existing and real phenomenon in Ahlu'l-bayt's life there is no more objection to the leadership of al-Imam al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) or to his succession to his father while he was very young.

HOW CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF AL-MAHDI?

Now we have reached the fourth question which is: Supposing that the hypothesis of the Expected Leader and all that it comprehends of prolonged life, early leadership and a silent absence, is possible, that would not be enough proof for his existence, thus, how can we indeed believe in the existence of al-Mahdi? Would some narratives related in books on the Great Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) be enough for perfect conviction in the existence of the Twelfth Imam, in spite of what this supposition bears of peculiarity and deviation from the norms? Or rather how can we prove that al-Mahdi had a true historical existence and that he is not only an assumption, for which psychological circumstances have been combined to confirm his existence in many people's minds?

The answer is: That the idea of al-Mahdi, as the Expected Leader, who will change the world for the best, has been already mentioned in several of the narratives (hadith) related from the Great Messenger in general, and the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt in particular. Moreover, it has been reconfirmed, with a degree beyond doubt, in many texts. I could count up to four hundred narratives of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) which reached us through our brothers, the Sunnis, (e.g., the book *'Al-Mahdi'* written by my uncle as-Sayyid Sadru'd-Din as-Sadr, may Allah bless his noble soul), as well as a great number of reports about al-Imam al-Mahdi through both

the Shi'ites and the Sunnis - nearly more than six thousand narratives. (e.g., the book entitled *Muntakhab al-athar fi al-Imam aththani 'ashar* [Selection of traditions concerning the Twelfth Imam] by ash-Shaykh Lutfu'llah as-Safi). which is very high statistical number, not found in many of the self-evident Islamic issues.

As regards the materialization of this idea in the Twelfth Imam (peace be upon him) we do possess enough justifications to be convinced that he is the one They can be summed up into two groups of evidence - the first Islamic, and the other scientific. By the Islamic evidence we confirm the existence of the Expected Leader. By the scientific evidence, we can prove that al-Mahdi is not just a myth or a supposition but a reality which has been confirmed by historical experience The Islamic evidence appears in the hundreds of narratives related from Allah's Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (peace be upon them). which prove that al-Mahdi will be appointed as Imam, that he is from the descendants of the Prophet and Fatemah and the ninth descendants from al-Hussein, that the caliphs (Prophet's successors) are twelve.

All of these narratives limited that universal idea by personifying it in al-Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam of Ahlul-Bayt. Moreover they reached a great number and diffusion, although the Imams took a great precaution and care, fearing their exposure on a general level, in order to protect the righteous descendants against

assassination or an unpredicted assault on his life. However, the numerical abundance of these narratives is not the only reason for their validity, for in addition to this, there are certain virtues and coherences to be taken into account for proving their validity. The Prophet's narratives (hadith) about the fact that the Imams, caliphs, or amirs - depending on the style of the narrative in its different ways are twelve. Some writers counted up to more than two hundred and seventy narratives taken from the most well-known books of Sunni and Shi'a traditions such as al-Bukhari, al-Muslim, at-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud and the collection of Ahmad ibn Hanbal and the Rectification of the Judge on the Two Sahihs (al- Hakim, Mustadrak 'ala s-sahihayn).

We should bear in mind here that al-Bukhari who had compiled these narratives, was a contemporary to both al-Imam al-Hadi and al-Imam al-'Askari which means quite a lot, since it proves that the narratives were recorded from the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) before that the realization of their contents and the idea of the Twelfth Imam had materialized. This means, therefore, that there is no room left for doubt, that the recording of the narratives was not influenced by the fact of the Twelfth Imam, or that it might have been a reflection of it, because the false narratives (hadith) that are related from the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) are either a reflection or a justification for a fact occurring later in time. Now, they did not precede in their appearance and recording in the books, that fact which they came to

reflect, therefore, as long as we possess the material evidence, which is that the mentioned narrative had already preceded the historical sequence of the twelve Imams, and that it had been recorded in the books of hadith (books of traditions) before that the event took place, we can be sure that this narrative is not a reflection of an event but an expression to a truth from Allah, uttered by the one who did not speak out of fancy (the Holy Prophet) when he said: "Surely the caliphs after me are twelve".

So, the event of the twelve Imams was fulfilled, starting with al-Imam 'Ali and ending in al-Mahdi, this way being the only rational interpretation to that noble narrative of the Prophet. As far as the scientific evidence is concerned, it is formed out an experience, lived by a community of people, lasting nearly seventy years, which we call the period of the minor occultation (ghaybah as-sughra) To elucidate this point, we will pave the way by giving a brief description This minor occultation marks the first phase in the Imamate of the Expected Leader (peace be upon him) From the time that had been predestined, from the time he assumed the role, he remained hidden from the outside world, distant from all the events that were taking place although being at the same time proximate to them in his mind and heart We should bear in mind that had this occultation occurred suddenly, the result would have been a great shock among the popular masses, who believed in the Imamate since they were used to contacting their Imam in every period, to consulting him for solutions

to their various problems. Thus, had he suddenly vanished, his supporters would have felt cut off from spiritual and intellectual leadership. Such an event would have created an enormous gap which would have thoroughly shaken the whole structure and undermined its unity. Therefore, it proved necessary that the way should be paved to this occultation, so that these bases might get used to it and gradually adapt themselves to the new situation.

So the plan was this minor occultation, during which al-Imam al-Mahdi vanished from the universal scene, while keeping in touch with his popular bases and supporters through his delegates or representatives and the most reliable among his companions who acted as a link between the Imam and those who believed in his line.

The position of representative of the Imam was held in those times, by four personalities, whom the popular bases agreed as to their fear of Allah, piety and integrity. They were:

- 1) 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-'Amri;
- 2) Muhammad ibn 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-'Amri;
- 3) Abu'l-Qasim al-Hussein ibn Ruh; and
- 4) Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad as-Samuri.

These four individuals assumed the role of representative of the Imam (al-Mahdi) according to the above classification. So whenever one of them died, the other succeeded him, after being designated by al-Imam al-Mahdi (peace be upon him). The representative of the Imam used to get in touch with the Shi'ahs and submit their questions

and problems to the Imam and return to them with his answers, Sometimes orally and very often in a written form. So these masses who lacked the vision of their Imam, found some comfort and consolation in these indirect communications.

Moreover they could notice that the signatures and the letters were all written in the same way, during the time of the four representatives that lasted nearly seventy years The last representative, as-Samuri, declared that the period of the minor occultation, which was characterized by the designated delegates, was over; that the period of the major occultation, in which there would be no designated individuals to mediate between the Imam and the Shi'ites, had began This transition meant that the minor occultation had already accomplished its mission and achieved its goal, since it immunized the Shi'ites against the great shock and the feeling of the profound gap caused by the Imam's occultation. In that way, it enabled them to adapt themselves to the situation and gradually prepared them to accept the idea of general representation on behalf of the Imam. By this token the latter changed from a representation by a designated individual to a more general line manifested in the just *mujtahid* (a legalist who arrives at an independent judgment), who has a keen insight into the religious and worldly issues of the Muslims, in view of the transition from the minor to the major occultation.

Now you can have an idea about the situation, in the light of what has been discussed up to now, so you can clearly realize that al-

Mahdi is a reality that a community of people has lived and which has been expressed for seventy years, by the representatives and the mediators of the Imam, whom no one could suspect of cheating nor of playing on words. For can you imagine - by your Lord - that a lie could survive for nearly seventy years, which four individuals would successively assume and agree upon and continue to interact with others on its basis as if it were a reality that they lived: that nothing would escape their control, which would cause a doubt in people's minds: that there would be no particular relation between the four through which they could gain the trust of everyone and their belief in the truth of the matter, which they pretend to live and feel?

An old proverb said, "The rope of lies is short". Also logic in life confirms the fact that it is impossible that a lie could survive in this way and for all time through these relations and still wins everyone's confidence.

Thus, the phenomenon of the minor occultation can be considered as a scientific experiment which has confirmed the factual objectivity of the Imam's existence, his birth, life and occultation, on account of which he has been hidden from the world and has not revealed himself to anyone ever since.

WHY HAS THE LEADER NOT APPEARED YET?

Why has the leader not appeared during all this long period if he were really prepared to assume his social work? What prevented

him from emerging during the period of the minor occultation or after, instead of extending it into a greater one, when the conditions for any social and transformative work were much simpler and easier and when the leader's relation with the people, owing to the minor occultation organizations, could have made it possible for him to organize the ranks and start the work with strength.

Also the authorities that existed then did not have that tremendous level of strength and power which humanity has achieved thanks to its technical and scientific evolution?

The answer is: That the success of any operation of social change is bound by certain conditions and objective circumstances without which it cannot achieve its aims. However all the operations of social change that are sent to earth from heaven are marked by the fact that the contents of their message are not bound by any objective circumstance. Since the message on which the whole operation depends is of the Lord's making and is not created by these objective circumstances, but rather relies on them on its executive side as well as for its timing, heaven waited five centuries of ignorance (*al-jahiliyyah*) before sending its last message into the hands the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny). since the connection that should exist between the objective circumstances and the execution required its postponement although the world had been waiting for it for a long time. Among the objective circumstances that have an effect on the executive part in the operation of change, are

those that create the right climate and the general atmosphere for the intended change, while others form some details required by the movement of change in its elaboration. For example, in the case of the operation of change led by Lenin in Russia, this operation was connected to an important factor manifested in the First World War and the decline of the Tsar, which played a major part in creating the appropriate climate for the operation of change. It was also linked to partial and limited factors such Lenin's health, during his trip and when he entered Russia and led the revolution. For had he met with an incident while on his way, he would have been delayed and the revolution would have lost its ability for that swift move. However, the unchangeable custom of Allah in every Divine operation of change proceeded, in its executive side, in accordance with the objective circumstances that created the appropriate climate and the general atmosphere for its success. Hence Islam came only after a great gap and long period which lasted for centuries after the messengers. Although Allah, the Exalted, could have overcome all the obstacles and difficulties that were on the way of the Divine message and created the appropriate climate by way of miracles, He preferred not to use such a style, since the tests, trials and the afflictions that make the human being perfect required that this Divine task be natural and objective. However, this did not prevent Allah, the Exalted, from interfering from time to time with some details that did not shape the appropriate climate but which were sometimes needed for the

movement within such a climate, such as the support that Allah, the Exalted, bestows on his saints during some of their difficult moments, so as to protect the message. So suddenly Nimrod's fire becomes cool and a peace for Ibrahim. When the traitor's hand which was bearing the sword to strike the Prophet's hand was suddenly paralyzed and lost its ability to strike, also when suddenly the storm swept away the unbelievers and the polytheists' camps, when they were encircling Medina, on the Day of the Ditch (*yawmu'l-Khandaq*), thus terrorizing them. However, all of these events did not go beyond certain details and the provision of assistance during some decisive moments after the appropriate atmosphere had been already formed for the operation of change in a natural way and in accordance with the objective circumstances. In this light we can examine al-Mahdi's position to find that the operation of change, for which he had been prepared, is linked, on the executive side, as is the case with any other operation of social change to certain objective circumstances that participate in securing the convenient climate under which it will occur.

We must bear in mind that al-Mahdi has not been prepared for a limited social task nor for an operation of change limited to a particular part of the world or another. Since the message which Allah decreed for him has been a comprehensive change of the whole world and the leadership of humanity away from the darkness of transgression to the light of justice. However, it is not enough for this great operation that its message and its leader be made available, for

otherwise its conditions would have been fulfilled in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). Rather, an operation of such a scale requires a world-wide climate and a universal atmosphere which will fulfill the required objective circumstances for its realization. From a human perspective we should consider the feeling that the man of civilization experiences of exhaustion as an essential factor for the creation of that appropriate climate, which paves the way for the acceptance of the new message of justice. This feeling is established and implanted through the various experiments of civilization. out of which man comes overloaded with negativism regarding what has been built, and realizes his need for help, thereupon turning with his natural disposition to the unseen or the unknown.

From a material angle, it is possible that modern conditions of life are better equipped to realize the aims of the message worldwide than the conditions that existed in the previous periods - such as the period of the minor occultation - owing to what has been achieved in terms of shorter distances and a greater ease of interaction between the different nations of the world, as well as the availability of instruments and means that a central organization needs in order to carry out its program for the awareness of the different nations of the world and their education on the bases of the new message.

Yet what I hinted at here, which is a fact, is the growth of military strength and equipment that faces the leader of the appointed day whenever his appearance is delayed But to what avail can the

growth of the material aspects be, when there already exists a psychological defeat for it from within and the spiritual collapse of that man who possesses all these equipments and power?

Indeed many were the occasions, in history, when the gigantic structure of a whole civilization collapsed only with the smallest conquering gesture. That was because it has been already falling apart and loosing confidence in its existence and trust in its reality

CAN AN INDIVIDUAL ASSUME THIS ROLE?

Now we have reached another question in this series, which is: Can an individual, however great he may be, achieve this great role? Is not such an individual only that one who is selected by circumstances and faced with the realization of their movement? The idea here is related to a particular view of history, which interprets the latter on the basis that man is only a secondary factor in it, while the objective strength that surrounds him is the essentials. In this sense the individual can only be, in the best of situations, the intelligent expression to that essential factor. However, [we had already made it clear, in other printed material] that history is made up of two poles: The first one being man and the second the material strength that surrounds him. Thus, while this material strength, the circumstances of production and nature affect man; the latter also exerts an influence upon them. Moreover, there is no evidence for the assumption that the movement starts from material conditions and ends up with man.

except when there is an evidence for the contrary, since both factors interact in time. Therefore, within this framework, an individual can be more than a parrot in the historical trend, especially when we take into account his relation with heaven, since the latter intervenes, then, as a guiding power to this historical trend that has been the case in the history of all the prophets, especially the last one since by virtue of the relation of his message with heaven, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny), assumed by himself the reins of the historical movement and started a civilized expansion which the objective circumstances that existed around him, could not bring about in any case, as we have already mentioned in the introduction of *al-Fatawa al-wadiah*.

Therefore, what had been achieved at the hands of the Great Messenger could occur also at the hands of the Expected Leader from among his progeny whom he announced and whose role he hinted at.

HOW WILL THE CHANGE ON THE APPOINTED DAY OCCUR?

Now we have reached the last question, which is about the manner through which we can form an image about what will be accomplished at the hands of this individual in terms of a decisive victory for justice and an end to the existence of transgression that he is faced with?

The limited answer for this question is related to the knowledge of the time and the phase in which al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) is supposed to emerge to the world, as well as the possible assumption regarding what peculiarities and close relations, might characterize that phase so as to be able to draw, in that light, the shape that the operation of change would take and the path that it would follow.

But as long as we do not know anything concerning that phase, its environment nor its circumstances, we cannot scientifically predict what would take place on the appointed day, although we can imagine or give certain assumptions in this respect, which are founded on theoretical bases and not on realistic grounds. There is one basic assumption which we can adopt in the light of the previous narratives we mentioned earlier, as well as in the light of the great operations of change in the course of history, namely the appearance of al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) after a great gap which will result in a shocking decadence and a crisis in civilization. This gap will give the opportunity for the message to expand and the decadence of civilization will prepare the psychological atmosphere for its acceptance. However, this decadence in civilization is not a mere incident that will occur suddenly in the history of human civilization, but a natural result of a contradiction in a history that is cut off from Allah the Exalted, that cannot reach a decisive solution of the end of its course, so that its fire will burn leaving nothing in its path and the light will then appear to establish Divine justice on earth.



The Last Luminary

There is no doubt that the Holy Qur'an is the book of Allah's (SWT) and that all Muslims of the world are required to accept its teachings and instructions. When one opens the Qur'an and casts a glance at its verses he will come across to what seems to be a clear landscape of an extraordinary, sensational, and exciting future and the end of the universe.

The Qur'an indicates that the ultimate mission of the Prophet of Islam was to make this religion prevail over all other religions in the world; and one day this holy aspiration will finally be fulfilled. Allah's (SWT) stated in Qur'an:

"It is He who has sent His messenger (Muhammad) with the guidance and the Religion of truth, to prevail over all religions, even though the idolaters may detest." (Qur'an 9:33)

The Holy book of the last Messenger of Allah's (SWT) gives the glad tidings that the rule over the earth shall finally belong to the righteous and virtuous servants of Allah's (SWT):

"The earth is Allah's. He gives it as a heritage to whom He wills, and the good end is for the righteous people." (Qur'an 7:128)

And He, Exalted, also said:

"And We wrote in Psalm (Zabur) after the Reminder that surely My righteous servants will inherit the earth." (Qur'an 21:105)

The earth which will be full of corruption destruction and ignorance, like a lifeless body, will be revived with the glowing light of justice as indicated in His book:

"Know that Allah gives life to earth after its death!" (Qur'an 57:17)

We also read in Qur'an:

"Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good deeds that He will surely make them succeed (the present rulers) in the earth as he caused those who were before them to succeed others and that He will surely establish for them religion which He has approved for them and will give them safety after their fear to worship Me and not to associate anything with Me." (Qur'an 24:55)

Allah's (SWT) also stated:

"They intend to put out the light of Allah with their mouths but Allah will complete His Light even though the unbelievers may detest." (Qur'an 61:8)

He, Exalted He is, also said:

"And We desired to show favor unto those who were oppressed in the earth to make them symbols and to make them inheritors." (Qur'an 28:5)

These were some short examples of the divine glad tidings mentioned in Qur'an. By studying these matters and tens of other similar indications, it is deduced that the Islamic message will reach its complete fulfillment when these holy aspirations will take place. All fabricated and superstitious objectives will disappear and then only the Islam, the unique and true religion, will be the faith of the people in the east and west of the world. Injustice, oppression, and inequality shall vanish, and instead, justice and equality which is the law of the creation of the world will be established everywhere. The Kingdom of the divinely appointed Caliph (*Khalifatullah*) will manifest itself in all the corners of the world. The light of the guidance of Allah's (SWT) will shine and the earth shall belong to the virtuous ones. Yes, Qur'an gives the Good News, which the day that all Muslims of the world are enthusiastically waiting for it, will arrive.

Beside Qur'an, the sayings of the Prophet are the most important and worthiest treasure of Islamic learning. In the sea of jewels of Islamic traditions glad tidings on the Government of Justice

can be seen in regards to the "Divine Revolution" and the "divinely appointed leader" who will fulfill this holy aspiration.

In a tradition upon whose authenticity all Muslims agree, Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W.A) has said:

"Even if the entire duration of the world's existence has already been exhausted and only one day is left before Doomsday, Allah will expand that day to such length of time as to accommodate the kingdom of a person from my Ahlul-Bayt who will be called by my name. He will fill out the earth with peace and justice as it will have been full of injustice and tyranny (by then)."

The above precious tradition testifies that the golden divine promises will take place, sooner or later, one way or another, as also mentioned in most of the Shi'ite and Sunnite sources.

In both subjects of prophecy and *Imamate* (leadership) it is discussed that as a result of the law of general guidance which governs all of creation, human is of necessity endowed with the power of receiving revelation through prophecy, which directs him toward the perfection of the human norm and the well-being of the human species. Obviously, if this perfection and happiness were not possible for human, the very fact that he is endowed with this power would have been meaningless and futile. But there is no futility in creation.

In other words, ever since he has inhabited the earth, human has had the wish to lead a social life filled with happiness in its true sense and has striven toward this end. If such a wish were not to have

an objective existence it would never have been imprinted upon human's inner nature, in the same way that if there were no food there would have been no meaning for hunger (since hunger is understood when one compares a person who has eaten food and a person who has not), and if there were no water there would have been no thirst and if there were no reproduction there would have been no sexual attraction between the sexes.

Therefore, by the reason of inner necessity and determination, the future will see a day when human society will be replete with justice, when all will live in peace and tranquility, and when human beings will be fully possessed of virtue and perfection. The establishment of such a condition will occur through human hands but with Divine Assistance. And the leader of such a society is called in the language of the traditions, al-Mahdi (the Mahdi; the guided one).

In the different religions that govern the world (either divine or not) such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam there are references to a person who will come as the savior of mankind. These religions have given glad tidings of his coming, although there are naturally minor differences in detail that can be discerned when these teachings are compared carefully.

However one thing that all these teachings have in common is that "A human will come to establish peace and tranquility all over the earth". Every religion has a different attachment to it, however. The least thing that a human being (regardless of his religion) is supposed

to do is to accept what ALL these teachings have in common. This goes to prove the necessity of belief for "his coming". Thus, the saviors of all these religions who are all expected to come at the end of the time are manifested in one individual, since all establishes the foundation of such belief. The attachments of different religions can be reconciled on their own tendencies, and thus rejected. The fact remains that the teachings of the previous religions have been under a long alteration process, and only Islam has been guaranteed its survival. Thus we should accept the attachment that the traditions of the Prophet (S.A.W.A) has offered us with regard to the one who is coming whose name is Imam al-Mahdi (A.J) (and, of course, Jesus (A.S) will come as a follower of the Imam al-Mahdi's (A.J) based on the prophetic traditions).

There are numerous traditions cited in the Sunni and the Shi'a sources from the Holy Prophet concerning the appearance of the Mahdi, such as that he is of the progeny of the Prophet and that his appearance will enable human society to reach true perfection and the full realization of spiritual life. In addition, there are numerous other traditions concerning the fact that the Mahdi is the son of the Eleventh Imam, al-Hasan al-Askari (A.S), and that after being born and undergoing a long occultation (disappearance; living among people while he is not identified) the Mahdi will appear again, filling the world with justice as it has been corrupted by injustice and tyranny.

In a tradition the holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) said to the Commander of believers, Ali (AS). that:

"There will be twelve Guides after me, the first of whom is you, O' Ali, and the last one will be the 'Support' (al-Qa'im) who, with the grace of Allah, will gain victory over the whole east and west of the world."

Imam Ali al-Reza (A.S) (the eighth Imam) said. in the course of a tradition:

"The Imam after me is my son, Muhammad, and after him his son Ali, and after Ali his son, al-Hasan, and after al-Hasan his son Hujjat al-Qa'im (the proof of Allah who shall stand), who is awaited during his occultation and obeyed during his manifestation. Even if there remain from the life of the world but a single day, Allah will expand that day until he becomes manifest and fills the world with justice in the same way that it had been filled with injustice. But when? As for news of the hour (i.e., the moment of appearance), frequently my father told me, having heard it from his father who heard it from his father who heard it from his ancestors who heard it from Ali (the first Imam (A.S.)), that it was asked from the holy Prophet, O Prophet of God, when will the 'Support' (al-Qa'im) who is from your family appear? He said, His case is like that of the Hour (of time of the resurrection). *'Allah alone knows it and He will manifest it at its proper time. It is*

heavy in the heavens and the earth. It cometh not to you save unawares' (Qur'an 7:187)."

Musa al-Baghdadi said. I heard Imam Hasan al-Askari (A.S) (the eleventh Imam) who said:

"I see that after me differences will appear among you concerning the Imam after me. Whoever accepts the Imams after the Prophet of God but denies my son is like the person who accepts all the prophets but denies the prophet hood of Muhammad, the Prophet of God, upon whom be peace and blessing. And whoever denies (Muhammad) the Prophet of God is like one who has denied all the prophets of God, for obeying the last of us is like obeying the first of us and denying the last of us is like denying the first of us. But beware! Verily, for my son there is an occultation during which all people will fall into doubt except those whom Allah protects."

There are hundreds of prophetic traditions about Imam al-Mahdi (A.J), which have been recorded in both the Shi'ite, and Sunnite collections of traditions. A large number of religious scholars from all Islamic schools of thought have independently compiled books about Imam al-Mahdi, the leader of the time. Their number runs to tens of volumes. Thus believing in Imam al-Mahdi is not exclusive to the Shi'ites, as Sunni scholars also believe in him.



Glimpses of Al-Mahdi (A.J)

O the one who bestows honor upon the believers.

O the one who degrades the enemies of Allah (SWT) and the Prophet
(S.A.W.A).

O the Proof of Allah (SWT) on Earth.

O Abu Saleh Al-Mahdi (May Allah (SWT) hasten your reappearance).

This is another humble request to you, even though you are in occultation. We are restless due to your separation, and much remains to be said. Just know that countless things remain unsaid, countless couplets remain unsung and an unspecified number of martial songs remain unfinished. The words surge out in the form of tears. The eyes have become an imploring tongue. The field of human history is wide open before us.

and those who are in anticipation of your reappearance continue to be busy. Is it possible that we see your successful come-back before this request is complete?

Curious eyes gaze at the dhor of the morning in anticipating a glimpse of your luminous face. Do not prolong the already prolonged separation for those who wait for you, with firm determination and resolute intentions, with pure body and soul.

With the name of Allah (SWT) on the tongue and the name of His "*Wali*" in the heart they are dressed up in Ihram heading hastily for the promised rendezvous... All prepared to heed to the call...

THE BEGINNING OF MIGRATION

The auspicious days of celebrating the birth of our Master of the Age have renewed our desire to know more about him. Carrying his love, we begin to traverse the valley of His greatness. We carry his remembrance and his name in this world of knowledge and light and prepare ourselves for the journey.

You are a migrant in this spiritual migration. The provisions of your journey are sincerity, the helper is Allah (SWT) and the guide is the *Wali* of Allah.

The journey is within yourself. What is the result of this journey and migration?

It is self-accounting. Regarding those duties which have been made compulsory for us by Imam Zaman (May our lives be sacrificed for him) and we have made a covenant to fulfill those duties.

Those duties towards which we are totally inattentive, the utter negligence on our part has made Hadhrat sad. Hadhrat complains to Allah (SWT) for the acts of his people.

This is the time to spread the name and fill the whole world with the remembrance of Hadhrat (A.J) to invite the people towards his intellectual revolution to create the conditions favorable for his reappearance so that he (A.J) may fill the earth with the sweet scent of his reappearance and the buds of belief may bloom in the garden of his universal kingdom. Justice and knowledge may become widespread. These are some of the results that become manifest on the blessed occasion of the birth of Hadhrat Baqiyatullah (May our lives be sacrificed for him) Insh`Allah.

We now begin our discussion with the words of Hadhrat (A.J). so that the words that emanate from the soul shall become embedded in our soul. We may thus become aware that the holy personality is with us. It is this personality, which helps us in this age of difficulties and turmoil, and it is this being which guards and cares for us.

"In the Name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful"

May Allah (SWT) protect us from the mischief. And may Allah (SWT) bestow us with the soul of certainty and save us from a dreadful end.

A group from amongst you has created doubts regarding religion. We have received reports of the doubts that they harbored regarding their "Master of affairs."

I became aggrieved, not for my sake but for you. Because Allah (SWT) is with us and we are not in need of anyone but Him. And the truth is with us. Hence, I am not worried if anyone forgoes our obedience and leadership...

O people! Why are you involved in doubts and uncertainties? And why, in a condition of bewilderment and astonishment you have made it a doubtful problem? Don't you know that the Almighty has said:

"O those who believe obey Allah and obey his Prophet and those who have been given authority from among you."

Don't you know that according to the "hadiths" and narrations your past and the future Imams (A.S) will have to face various calamities?

Have you not seen that from the time of Adam (A.S) up to that of Imam Hasan al Askari (A.S) Allah (SWT) has always provided for you a refuge? Allah (SWT) has also established clear signs for you to recognise them, so that you can obtain guidance through their medium... And whenever a star sets, another star would begin to shine.

Do you think that after the death of Imam Hasan al Askari (A.S) Allah (SWT) had forsaken this religion and discontinued the medium that connected Him and His creatures?

No! It had not been so. It will not be till the day of Qiyamat and till the day of the reappearance of the Proof of Allah. Though the disbelievers are averse to it.

Imam Hasan al Askari (A.S) departed from this world in a righteous way. But like his forefathers he had left behind his will regarding his knowledge and his legatee among us. And except for the blatant disbelievers and tyrants no one disputes with us regarding this exalted position of Imamat. And except for the infidel who has abandoned truth, no one claims for himself this exalted position.

If there had been no risk of subordination of Allah (SWT) and betrayal of His secrets, our right upon you would have become manifest in such a grand manner that you would have been astonished and all your doubts would have disappeared. But whatever Allah (SWT) the Almighty has desired and whatever is written in Lauh-e-Mahfooz (the protected tablet) has to be fulfilled.

Therefore, you also must fear Allah (SWT) and surrender yourselves to us. Leave all the affairs to us so that every type of

goodness may reach the people from our existence. Do not insist upon being informed about all that has been hidden from you and do not deviate from the straight path. Remain aligned to the middle path.

Keep your aim with our devotion on a path that is sure to lead 'towards us. I have advised you regarding that which was necessary. And the Almighty Allah (SWT) is a witness upon me and upon you.

If we had no love towards you and if we had not cared for your success and your salvation, and if we had not been caring towards you, we would have discontinued communicating with you.

And may Allah (SWT) send his blessings upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad^ﷺ

Let us ponder upon these priceless words of Imam Zaman (May our lives be sacrificed for him) and ask our selves a question:

Who are those who have been addressed by Imam (A.J) thus?

Does this concern only a particular group of people in the city of Qum who had written a question to Imam (A.J) during the period of Minor Occultation? Or is it addressed to all the people living in the period of *ghaibat*?

Were the problems of doubts, deviations and disputes confined to that period only or they are relevant to, 'Every Age' also? Are we also not affected by such maladies?

If that is the case, then we and all those people who carry the load of the difficulties of occultation on their shoulders are also addressed by the exalted personality in this message. Then why do we not unite under the leadership of Hadhrat and confess our belief in the society, in the dynamic and effective personality?

Come let us see the profundity (depth) of Hadhrat's message when he says,

"We are cognizant of all your affairs and nothing is hidden from us. We are also aware the mistakes that you commit from the time, when most of you were inclined towards the evil deeds which your righteous ancestors had shunned.

And from the time they turned away from their covenant as if they had never made it. We are not deficient ill your welfare and care and your remembrance never leaves our heart. Had it been so, calamities would have descended upon you, and your enemies would have crushed you.

Fear Allah and help us and seek our guidance and help to extricate yourself from the mischief that has enveloped you.ⁱⁱⁱ

Is it proper to cause grief to the pious heart of such an affectionate Imam who never forgets his followers even for a moment, by our bad character and actions?

And break our covenant with him?

It is incumbent upon those who wish for the attention and favors of Imam (A.J) to strengthen their covenant with him (A.J) and to remain steadfast and resolute on this covenant. They should protect this covenant from the filth of their evil deeds and loose character. They should also take heed of the sorrowful words of Imam (A.J) when he says "If our Shi'a (May Allah (SWT) give them *tawfeeq* of His obedience) had been steadfast and united upon this covenant, our meeting them would not have delayed. The cause of our distance with them is that group, whose character is detestable to us."

As far as we are concerned, if there is any barrier between Hadhrat (A.J) and us it is because of us. He (A.J) is still in *ghaihat* due to our objectionable character. The way is clear before us. Our duties are clearly defined. The commands of Imam Zaman (A.J) are present to guide and lead us.

It is necessary for us to cleanse the impurities of our soul and to call Hadhrat (A.J) with our complete existence. We should wait day and night in right earnest for the successful revolution of Hadhrat (A.J). It is the command of Hadhrat (A.J) himself.

"And wait for the '*Faraj*' morning and evening"

(Imam Sadiq (A.S) Ghaibat-e-Nomani Pg.158)

"Hope for the rule of your master day and night, because everyday there is a new challenge for him and one engagement does not make him careless of his other duties. "

(Imam Sadiq (A.S) Mikyalul Makarim Vol.2 Pg.157)

Be prepared for his help and assistance. If not possible, at least hope for his reappearance every Friday. The following words should always be on your lips.

"O Leader, O Master of the age. Divine blessings be upon you and upon the people of your house. This is Friday. It is your day. It is the day of your reappearance. The believer will achieve bliss and happiness upon your hand and the disbelievers annihilation"ⁱⁱⁱ.

The day of Friday has been promised to be a day of your reappearance and the successful revolution. Whatever has been said about you is not impossible. "Mahdi is from us. Allah (SWT) will stretch his affair overnight".^{iv}

Doubtlessly, the sea of Allah's (SWT) miracles have no bounds, the sky of His Mercy has no horizon and no one can imagine the limit of the ocean of His Favors.

His exalted ones (*Awliya*) are also having similar qualities. They are such examples of greatness and miracles, highness and mercy that charity and forgiveness are their habits and bravery and greatness are the essence of their existence.

Imam Zaman (A.J) is a member of this exalted and meritorious family. He is in Ghaibat due to some special reasons. Although he is away from our eyes, yet he is present and helps and guides the believers. He is not deficient in this regard. He is always occupied in the duties of guidance and Imamate, and continues to lead the sons of *Shariat* (the believers). His mercy and care are being continuously showered upon the *Ummat* of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A).

Doubtlessly, Hadhrat (A.J) is the supreme leader of the *Ummat*, the explorer of true *Shariat*, the standard bearer of guidance. His existence is the foundation of true guidance. His continued existence is the basis of the continuous existence of the world of time and space.

However, due to the circumstances that resulted in the Imam's Ghaibat it became pertinent for Hadhrat to entrust the duties of the exposition of Islamic laws to the *Fuqaha* (jurists). These jurists are only those who have the requisite qualities (of piety and justice) so that in the event of any problems, these jurists would clear the existing doubts and expose the truth concerning a particular legal ruling. This way, the common people can take refuge with these jurists and follow them in matters of Islamic law.

Thus, the apparent leadership was entrusted to the jurists who conformed to the criteria as explained by Imam Ja'far as Sadiq (A.S) in the following tradition:

"From among the jurists, one who has control over his own lusts and desires (that is, he overcomes and stops his desires to take

control over him) one who is the protector of his religion and is the obedient follower of the orders of his Imam (A.J), then it is incumbent upon the people to follow their orders. And this will be true only in case of some of the Shi'a ulama and not all."^v

And Imam Zaman (A.J) says about them:

"For new Problems refer to those who narrate our sayings. For certainly they are my Hujjat upon you and I am the Hujjat of Allah upon them. One who rejects them rejects us and our rejection is the rejection of Allah."^{vi}

It is evident that the incidence of the new problems is widespread in the period of Ghaibat. The history of Ghaibat is replete with such incidents. Jurisprudence includes the total derivation of Islamic laws. It is not confined only to the meaning of the Qur'anic Ayahs and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) and his progeny (A.S). Rather the dictionary meaning of "*Fuqaha*" denotes a person who is having profound and exhaustive Knowledge about a particular matter. In addition to this, he has perceptive powers and integrity.

The meaning of '*Fuqaha*' (derived from '*faqih*') according to Islamic terminology is a person who is an expert in the derivation of Islamic laws from their sources and also has perceptive ability and a lofty character. The common people are supposed to refer to him and follow him (do his *taqleed*) in solving their legal problems.

On the basis of this and our religious understanding it becomes necessary to accept in practice, the authority of a jurisprudent who has the necessary qualities. The Holy Imams (A.S) ordered this. We follow their directive in accepting the authority of the *Fuqaha*.

It is necessary to point out the fact that although the responsibility of guidance rests on the *Fuqaha*, they themselves are not left to fend for themselves. Imam (A.J) himself helps and guides them whenever the need arises.

Imam (A.J) thus says.

"Because they (the *Fuqaha*) are my proof upon you and I am Allah's proof upon them."

Nothing prevents Hadhrat (A.J) from helping and guiding the *Fuqaha* as well as the common people whenever they are in need. Time and again, Imam (A.J) has helped the *Fuqaha* and came to assist those who were in difficulties and had called to him for help.

In this book, we present a few incidents when the Imam (A.J) openly helped and guided the *Fuqaha* and also some common people. By reading these anecdotes we can enlighten our hearts by increased remembrance of Hadhrat Hujjat (A.J). This would bring us nearer to this exalted personality. Another fact that becomes evident from these incidents is that Hadhrat is cognizant of the social condition of the people and whenever they are confronted with a difficult problem and seek help of Hadhrat (A.J), he solves the same by the permission of Allah (SWT).

We live in the hope of receiving our share of blessings from this exalted household in proportion of our love for them we pray and hope to be included among those who have been blessed by the blessed audience of Imam (A.J).

Before we begin the actual narrations we would like to mention a few points.

First of all, these incidents are the irrefutable proofs that even in the time of ghaibat, Hadhrat (A.J) is always present to help and guide the "*Fuqaha*" and also the common people.

In these incidents, Imam (A.J) has time and again helped the people and *Fuqaha* openly. Apart from this, history is also replete with incidents when Imam (A.J) has helped without coming into the picture. And this type of help is of a greater significance.

One can only continue to read these anecdotes till the time the Almighty Allah (SWT) orders him to reappear openly and rid the people of sorrow and grief and emancipate them from their difficulties. All this depends upon his [Hadhrat's (A.J)] mercy and the permission of Allah (SWT).

Secondly, we must not think that only these particular people have been blessed by Imam's (A.J) help. On the other hand, it is also not that every religious scholar has the opportunity to meet Hadhrat (A.J). There had been a large number of people who had met Imam (A.J) but who did not disclose their meeting him and thus those incidents were not recorded in history.

It is possible to mention only a few of such incidents in this brief article. Those who are fired with the zeal to see Imam (A.J) and love him earnestly can refer to detailed books in regards to this subject.

Another important point is that these incidents do not conflict with the sayings of Imam (A.J) wherein he had ruled out the possibility of meeting him. "Meeting" in those traditions denote meeting him at will. It concerns those who claim to be able to meet Imam (A.J) whenever they desire. These people claim falsely and try to project themselves as his special representatives. It does not include those whom Imam (A.J) met by his own will and wish. The incidents mentioned in this book are with the meeting of Imam (A.J). They never claimed for themselves, special deputyship of Imam (A.J). They always considered their audience with Imam (A.J) to be a sort of a special favor bestowed on them. It is one of the cardinal beliefs of the Shi'ahs.

We would also like to mention that those who are afflicted by skepticism in this regard and think that it is highly improbable should know that they are also narrow minded like the materialists. They are engulfed in the dust of ignorance and refuse to believe in the formidable power, which the Almighty bestows upon his representative (A.J).

Nothing is impossible for the Almighty who protected Ibrahim (A.S) in the fire by Nimrod and split the Nile for Musa (A.S), caused the dead to return to life at the hands of Isa (A.S). Enabled Nuh (A.S)

to live for 950 years prior to the deluge. Revealed the Qur'an to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A). He is very well capable of endowing Imam (A.J) with the strength and ability to perform astonishing feats.

Thus it is imperative for us to realize the favors of Imam Zaman (A.J) and his greatness. We should not despair; rather we should sow the seeds of hope in the deepest confines of our heart. We also await ardently for this exalted personality as much as possible. For he is the one whom does the Almighty bestow with unlimited favors.

"Do no despair of the mercy of Allah for no one despairs of the mercy of Allah except the unbelievers." (Surah Yusuf: 87)

The Holy Qur'an also says:

*"And who is hopeless of the mercy of their Lord except those...
astrayed ones."* (Surah Hijr: 56)

Let us imbibe our hearts with the breeze of unlimited Divine mercy without being misled by the poisonous winds of hopelessness and despair exuded by Shaitan.

Come let us visit the realm of his miracles.

SOME OF THE EXALTED MIRACLES

1. BORN THROUGH THE PRAYERS OF IMAM ZAMAN (A.J)

We intend to relate the incident of one of the greatest Shi'a scholars of the fourth century, who had earned the title of *Muallim* (teacher). His book, *Man la Yahzarahul Faqih* is one of the four

canonical books of Shi'ite hadith. It is an indispensable work of reference by the mujtahids of Shi'a faith.

The exalted position of Shaikh Sadooq (died 381 A.H.) can be gauged from the fact that he was born through the prayers of Imam Zaman (A.J), may our lives be sacrificed for him. Throughout his life he was the center of Hadhrat's attention and favors... the incident is as follows:

The father of Shaikh Sadooq (R.A) was known by the name of Ali Ibn Babawayh. He was one of the well-known jurisprudent and scholar of hadith in the city of Qum [Iran]. Though he had been married to his cousin for a number of years he was not yet blessed with any children.

In the year 305 A.H., he visited Baghdad and met the special representative of Imam (A.J), Hussein Ibn Ruh Nawbakhti. Ibn Babawayh sent a letter through Muhammad bin Aswad with the request that it may be presented to Imam Zaman (A.J) to pray to Allah (SWT) in this regard.

A reply was soon received from Imam (A.J) as follows: "You will not have any children by this wife. I have prayed for you in this regard and soon you will be blessed with two sons (who would become jurists) through a lady of the Dailamite tribe."^{vii}

As foretold by Imam Zaman (A.J), Ibn Babawayh married a Dailamite lady after some time. The Almighty Allah (SWT) blessed him with two sons whom he named Muhammad and Hussein.

Both his sons soon earned fame as the Shi'ite jurists and scholars of traditions in the city of Qum. Very few scholars of that time could reach such an exalted position.

The exceptional ability and brilliance especially in the narrating and memorizing of hadith; and his truthfulness soon earned for him the title of Sadooq. He later became famous by this very honorific.

The contemporary scholars and his friends were amazed at his knowledge and infallible memory. It was evident that his brilliant mind and non-stop successes were due to the blessings of the prayers of Imam-e-Asr (A.J.).

He himself agreed to this fact and felt much honored for the same. He often said, "I am born through the prayers of Imam-e-Asr (A.J)."

2. COMMANDED BY IMAM (A.J) TO WRITE A BOOK

The incident is narrated in the introduction of the same book as follows: -

The following events caused me to write this book:

"When I had the honor of visiting the mausoleum of my master Hadhrat Imam Abul Hasan ar-Raza and was returning home. I stayed at Nishapur for some time. Many of the Shi'ahs used to visit me. From the discussions I had with them, I surmised that they were amazed and astonished at the *Ghaibat* of Imam Zaman (A.J.).

They were unfortunately haunted by doubts regarding Hadhrat (A.J). They had strayed from the straight path through their personal opinions and analogy. I tried my best to discuss with them and bring them back to the right path. Hence, I invited their attention to the authentic traditions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) and his purified household (A.S) in this regard.

One day I was pondering upon the comfortable life that I had lived in my town of Rey, with my family, children and brothers. All of a sudden sleep overcame me. I dreamt that I was circumambulating around the Ka'bah. In the seventh round I came to Hajar-e-Aswad and kissed it saying, "This is a trust that I submit and the covenant that I fulfill so that you give witness of my loyalty."^{viii}

At that very moment I saw my Master, Hadhrat Qa'im Sahebuzaman (Peace be upon him) as he stood at the door of Ka'bah. I went towards him in a condition of grief and remorse. Hadhrat (A.J) came to know my inner feelings by looking at my face. I said 'salam' to him and after replying he said, "Why don't you compile a book on the subject of ghaibat so that you become free of sorrow and grief." I said, "Son of the Prophet of Allah, I have collected some matter regarding ghaibat." He (A.J) told me, "It is not as I want it to be written. Write a comprehensive book on Ghaibat and also mention therein the Ghaibat of the Prophets of Allah," said the Imam (A.J).

After this Hadhrat (A.J) departed. I awoke with a start and spent the time from dawn till sunrise: in prayers, supplications and entreaties to Allah (SWT). I complained about the difficult times. When it was morning, I began to write the book as ordered by the Hujjat of Allah (SWT). I continued to pray to Allah (SWT) for help and also sought forgiveness of sins.^{iv}

This incident teaches us that: We must plead and request for the help of Hadhrat (A.J). In times of difficulties we must seek his assistance and take refuge with him. We must make people aware about the existence of Hadhrat (A.J), an as much as possible we should try to remove the doubts regarding Hadhrat (A.J) from the minds of the people.

3. DOCUMENT OF PRAISE FOR A TRUE FOLLOWER

This is with regard to a great scholar and jurisprudent who was praised by Imam (A.J) in his communication to him. Imam (A.J) writes:

"Peace be upon you, O sincere friend in religion. One who is the helper of truth. One who calls the people with truth to the right path. Peace be upon you O sincere friend. One who receives inspiration from truth."

Doubtlessly Imam (A.J) wrote these words in praise of Shaikh Mufeed (R.A) (339-413 A.H).

Shaikh Mufeed (R.A) was such a great personality that Imam (A.J) wrote to him many times and solved for him various problems of Islamic Laws.

The command was an honor for the young man

As far as history is concerned it is an established fact that Hadhrat (A.J) himself wrote, at least, three letters to this exalted scholar. The matter contained in those letters makes one feel that as if they are overflowing with the meaning and hidden wisdom. As if they are the springs of mercy and love. It is also necessary for one who is honored with seeing the Imam to be influenced by the unsurpassable love and mercy of Hadhrat (A.J)

"This letter is for the believer brother and the correctly guided friend Abu Abdullah Muhammad Bin Muhammad Bin Numan. Shaikh Mufeed, who is from the covenant that the people hold as a divine trust. The covenant that the Almighty had taken from the people.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Peace be upon you, O the sincere one of the Faith. One whose belief holds a high position with us. I thank Allah (SWT); except whom there is no deity. We pray to the Almighty, the Everliving to ever bless our master, our Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.A) and his purified progeny. May Allah (SWT) continue to give tawfeeq to help and support the truth. Whatever you

narrate through us is most rewarding and oils the basis of its truth.

We hereby declare: We have been given the permission to honor you by having correspondence with you. We make it incumbent upon you to convey our messages to our supporters.

May Allah (SWT) endear them for their obedience and remove their difficulties through His protection and attention... Those who wish to make our friendship a channel (wasila) of and yearn to be close to it, must do good deeds. They must keep away from those things that we dislike and those actions that are lowly with respect to Allah (SWT). Because Allah (SWT) will make people to die all of a sudden. When repentance will be of no avail and when regret will also be unable to procure salvation. May Allah (SWT) continue to bless you with His Mercy. This is our letter to you, O Affectionate brother. One who loves us with sincerity and purity of the heart. You are our faithful helper May Allah (SWT), the One whom sleep does not overcome, always protect you..."*

Such affectionate words create a sense of unbounded joy and excitement among the readers.

On one hand Imam (A.J) teaches the correct way of living and on the other, he reminds us that he never forsakes the welfare of the followers of his grandfather (the Holy Prophet S.A.W.A.). These

words also tell us the lofty position of the successful Ulama and the true waiters of Imam (A.J). May Allah (SWT) give us the *Tawfeeq* to tread this path.

4. A SON'S LEGACY

Raziuddin Ali Ibne Musa Sayed Ibne Tawoos (589/664) is one of those special people who have had the honor of meeting Imam (A.J) more than once. His life, his behavior, and his writings are a clear indication of his lofty position and piety.

One of his most important books is "Al-Muhajjal Samaratal Muhajja" (Its title in Farsi [Persian] is_title "Bamame-Saadat"). It is considered to be a charter of duties for a religious life. Sayed Ibne Tawoos had written it in the form of a will to his son. We shall mention herewith his commands with regards to Imam Zaman (May our lives be sacrificed on him). He has also narrated authentic incidents of Imam's (A.J) beneficence that prove the sincerity and the indomitable faith of Sayed Ibne Tawoos. We should read these with rapt attention and examine our beliefs about our master (A.J). We must consider them as a standard for us.

"My son, Muhammad, May Allah (SWT) decorate your complete existence with the love of His loved ones (Awliya) and the hatred of His enemies. Know that when I received the news of your birth during the days of *Ziarat-e-Ashura*, I was at Karbala. I thanked Allah (SWT) for the great favor and by His permission stood up in

obescience before -the Imam Zaman (A.J) and as a thankful gesture, dedicated you as a servant to him. I sought refuge with Imam Zaman (A.J) during all those happenings that are repeated for you. I saw Imam (A.J) in my dreams a number of times and he enriched me with his bounties. He has fulfilled your needs. I feel incompetent to describe his virtues. Therefore we must love him, seek his friendship. be loyal to him and be attached to him with our heart in a way as wished by Allah (SWT), the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) and Hadhrat (A.J) himself, we must give preference to his wishes over our own wishes.

You must begin with the taking out of *Sadaqa* for Imam (A.J) before yourself or for your ailing loved ones. You must also give priority for supplication for him before you pray for yourself. You must do every possible good deed to fulfill the rights of Hadhrat (A.J) and to invite his attention. You must present your needs to Hadhrat (A.J) every Monday and Thursday with utmost humility.

When you address Hadhrat (A.J), first salute him and then recite the Ziarat which begins with "*Salamullah-al-Kaamil*" And say: "O Chief! Distress has afflicted our family and us and we have brought scanty money. so give us full measure and be charitable to us: Surely Allah rewards the charitable. *They said: By Allah! Now has Allah certainly chosen you over us, and we were certainly sinners. They said: O Our father! Ask forgiveness for our faults for us, surely we were sinners.*" (Surah Yusuf: 88-91-97)

And say: O our chief and our master, this is the conversation of Prophet Yusuf's brother with Yusuf (A.S) and their father (Yaqoob A.S.) after they had committed all kinds of atrocities. The Prophets (A.S) had mercy on them and forgave their mistakes. So if we are not liked and acceptable by Allah (SWT), the Prophet, your ancestors (Imams A.S.) and even to yourself, then you are more deserving and competent than Yusuf (A.S) to bestow us with your mercy and forgiveness..."^{vi}

The pious and practicing scholars certainly have this kind of attachment with Imam (A.J). They train their children on similar lines.

Many other incidents of such love and affection for Imam (A.J) can be seen on other pages of this book.

THE SUPPLICATING VOICE OF IMAM ZAMAN (A.J)

Allamah Majlisi has mentioned in his book "Aneesul Aabidain" from the reliable sources that one morning Sayed Ibne Tawoos heard Imam Zaman (A.J) reciting the following invocation at the cellar (Sardab).

O Allah! It is certain that our followers have been created from the rays of our light and our superior *teenat* (dust). There is no doubt in the fact that they commit some sins on the basis of their love for us. Thus, ignore the sins if they are only between you and them. Please improve their conditions and give them in

lieu of our Khums and make them enter Paradise and keep them away from fire of Hell and because of their sins do, not consider them at par with Your enemies.

Even if Imam (A.J) had not said anything other than these sentences, it would have sufficed to prove the affection of Imam (A.J) for his followers. We should try to learn more about the miracles, life and supplications of Imam Zaman (A.J) as recorded by Sayed Ibne Tawoos. To purify oneself in the sea of *Murefat*, to make each cell of his filled with Hadhrat's love, to make this blood flow in the veins of his children, to train his children to tread the lighted path is the aim of every follower of the awaited personality.

5. HADHRAT VALI ASR (A.J) COMPLETED THE BOOK

Allamah Hilli (648-726 A.D.) (May Allah (SWT) be satisfied with him) is the most remarkable personality of the Shi'ahs. He had no equal during his period and was the most outstanding writer of the Shi'ahs. The Imam Zaman (A.J) with a special favor has specially blessed him. The following incident is well known among the people.

We have related the incident from the "Majalisul Momineen" of Shaheed Salis Qazi Nurullah Shustari.

One of the exceptional aspects of Allamah Hilli's time was that during his tenure a person had written a book against Shi'ism and he used to quote from it in assemblies and thus managed to mislead quite a few people and created doubts regarding the Imamate faith.

However, he never lent anyone this book for the fear that it may fall into the hands of the Shi'ahs and they may write a rebuttal.

In order to obtain this book, Allamah Hilli, began to attend the sermons of this man and also introduced himself as a student of this person. After having achieved the confidence of the teacher he requested him to lend the book for some time.

It was difficult for that person to refuse Allamah Hilli; so he told him, "I have vowed that I will not give this book to anyone for more than a single night."

Allamah Hilli accepted it, as there was no other way. That night he felt very exalted and began to copy the book. He had planned to take down as much as possible so that he could refute the arguments of the book. Around midnight when he could not resist the onslaught of sleep, a respectful guest arrived and after the pleasantries he told Allamah Hilli to go to sleep and entrust him with the completion of the book.

Allamah agreed to it without any questions. When he woke up after some time, he found that there was no sign of his guest. Upon searching he found that his guest had already completed the book; and at the end of it something extra was mentioned. When he looked closely, he found that the following words had been added at the end: "Inscribed by the Hujjat."^{xii}

We must however note that not every follower can become the center of Imam's attention and help. We must question ourselves whether we are eligible or not.

Another instance of Imam's (A.J) help to Allamah Hilli is recorded in History. Once the Allamah was confronted with some legal problems and he did not know the correct solution. Imam (A.J) had solved these questions for Allamah Hilli.

6. MY SON MAHDI IS AT THE KUFA MOSQUE

One of those exalted personalities who have had the honor of meeting Imam (A.J) and having their problems solved by Imam (A.J) was the great scholar Muqaddas Ardebeli (died 993 A.H.). He was so famous for his piety and worship that whenever a comparison was intended he was mentioned as the ideal example. It is well known that whenever Muqaddas Ardebeli came across a difficult question he used to go near the tomb of Amirul Momineen Ali (A.S) and seek the solution for the same. Hadhrat Ali (A.S) used to provide the answer to his question. He had reached such a high position due to his piety and firm belief in Imamate that he was capable of direct communication with Imam Ali (A.S) One of the students of Muqaddas Ardebeli and a scholar in his own right was aware of his master's capabilities. He writes thus:

"One night I was tired due to prolonged study, and in order to refresh myself, I was taking a stroll in the courtyard of the mausoleum

of Amirul Momineen Ali (A.S). Suddenly, I saw a shadow approaching the tomb although all the doors of the building were locked. Curious to see the outcome of this all, I followed the shadowy figure. When the figure reached the sanctum all the locks opened automatically and the door swung open as he put his hand on it. He finally stood before the tomb of Ali (A.S) and saluted. I even heard the reply to his salam. Then a conversation began in the same voice. Before the conversation could reach to its conclusion, the shadowy figure emerged and began to walk out of the city in the direction of Masjid-e-Kufa. I began to follow him. The person entered Masjid-e-Kufa and upon reaching the niche he began to converse with someone.

When the conversation ended he came out of the mosque and began to walk back to the city. The whiteness of dawn had begun to spread all over the surroundings. People were slowly arising from their beds and preparing themselves for the morning prayers. As I was following the figure quietly, I could not suppress a sneeze. The person I was following became aware. He turned around and looked at me. When I looked at his face, I saw that he was my teacher, Ayatullah Muqaddas Ardebeli.

I conveyed my salam to him and confessed that I had been following him all night since he had entered the tomb of Amirul Momineen (A.S). I then implored him to tell whom he was conversing within the purified sanctuary and the mosque of Kufa.

The late Muqaddas Ardebeli first made me promise that I will not divulge this secret during his lifetime. Then he said:

"My son! Sometimes it is, that I find a Particular problem difficult to solve. I present it to (*Mushkil Kusha*) Ali Ibn Abi Talib (A.S) and obtain the solution from him. Last night Hadhrat Amirul Momineen (A.S) guided me towards Hadhrat Sahebuzzaman (A.J) and said.. "My son Mahdi is in the Mosque of Kufa. He is the Imam of your time. Go to him and seek the reply to your question."

I went to the mosque of Kufa as per his orders and found my master Hadhrat Mahdi (A.J) standing in the niche of the mosque. I asked him the questions and received their replies.^{xiii}

7. GIFT OF IMAM ZAMAN (A.J)

Allamah Muhammad Taqi Majlisi (R.A.) (1003-1070) was a virtuous and extremely pious scholar. His father Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (R.A.) was one of the greatest scholars among the Shi'ahs. He spent his life in collecting and expounding the traditions of the Purified Ahlul Bayt (A.S). The illustrious son writes about his father thus:

Apart from the Holy Ahlul Bayt (A.S) the person responsible for helping me to achieve this position is my respected father..."^{xiv}

Hence Muhammad Taqi Majlisi writes in the 4th Volume of "Shar of Man La Yahzarahul Faqih" in the biography of the narrator of "Sahifa-e-Kamela Sajjadiya Mutawakkil Bin Umair" about the beneficence of Imam Zaman (A.J).

While explaining his true dreams, he says: "Because I did not wish for anything in the world except the satisfaction of Hadhrat Vali Asr (A.J) and did not find peace in anything except his remembrance, Hadhrat invites me, he answers difficult questions of knowledge. Hadhrat ordered me to be steadfast in *Namaz [Salat]-e-Shab* [night prayer], when I requested him to advise me about a book that I can keep reading he indicated for me "Sahifa-e-Sajjadiayah" and told me that he had left a copy of it for me at such and such place with so and so person, that I should go and collect it, it was a gift from him.

In the dream itself I went to the place indicated by Hadhrat to collect the book. Later on, when I woke up, I went in search of the same house. I found it as I had seen it in the dream and was able to receive a copy of the book left by Hadhrat to me."

He was always occupied in the remembrance of his master, Hadhrat Vali Asr (A.J). He used to weep incessantly for him and for his love. After the above incident he became closer to Allah (SWT) through the repetition of the sentences of the *du'as* contained in the book. He always strived to publicize and promote this copy of Sahifa just like the sun shines and illuminates the right way for the travelers. All this was due to the miraculous favors of Hadhrat Sahib al-Amr and the blessings of that Sahifa which was gifted to him.

We derive the following lessons from the ardent lovers of Imam Zaman (A.J): In the darkness of night, speak about all your secrets and complaints to the Almighty. Recite *Namaz-e-Shab*. We

must also have a high regard for the supplications of 'Sahifa' because they are the actual words of Imam Sajjad (A.S). We must even remain hopeful of the favors of Hadhrat Mahdi (A.J).

8. THE CURATIVE MEDICINE

The compiler of the corpus of Hadith by the title "Wasail-ush-Shia" was the great scholar and jurist named Shaykh Hurr al-Amili (1033-1104), He was a great influence on the contemporary and later scholars.

He has narrated a miracle of Hadhrat Baqiatullah (A.J) where a person named Suleman was the recipient of medicine from Hadhrat himself.

"When I was ten years old. I was seriously ill. So much so that my family members were thinking that I will not survive. Each of them embraced me and wept and they were prepared mentally for my death that night. That night in my dreams I saw the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) and the Imams (A.S). I offered my salams to them and did *Musafeha* (shook hands) with each of them in turn. When I reached Imam Sadiq (A.S) we exchanged some words. I do not remember anything from our conversation except that he prayed to Allah (SWT) for me. When I came upon Imam Zaman (A.J) I wept to him that I was afraid I would die in this disease. I also told him that I had not even achieved my ambitions in the field of knowledge and piety.

Imam (A.J) replied. "Do not fear you will not die due to this illness. Allah (SWT) will cure you and bestow a long life to you."

Then he gave me a bowl that was held by him I drank it and was cured instantly and the disease was cured from the root. My family members were astonished."

9. THE SPIRITUAL VOICE OF IMAM ASR (A.J)

Allamah Bahrul Uloom (R.A.) (1 155-1212') is one of those scholars who had been favored by Imam's (A.J) audience more than once. He was blessed with meeting the Imam's (A.J) times. All the scholars have praised his piety and accepted his superiority in piety and knowledge. They have narrated his achievements in their writings. Muhaddith Qummi has recorded in his book "Rejal" eight meetings of Bahrul Uloom's with the Imam of our age. One of such incidents is mentioned here when Imam (A.J) made him sit near him and spoke to him in private..."

What a great achievement it is for a follower of *wilayat* that he is able to reach a stage in piety when the Imam Zaman (A.J) embraces him.

One day the people saw Allamah Bahrul Uloom in an unusual state. Standing before the mausoleum of Ali (A.S) instead of reciting the Ziarat in an upbeat mood, his eyes were filled with tears when he

recited the following lines: " How pleasant it is to bear the recitation of Qur'an in your lovely voice."

Afterwards, when he was asked the reason for this, he said: "When I was about to enter the sanctuary of Amir-ul-Momineen (A.S), I saw Hadhrat Hujjat seated at the head of Ali's (A.S) tomb reciting the Qur'an in a state of concentration. Upon seeing him I began to repeat those words. But when I entered the Mausoleum I found that Hadhrat (A.J) had finished the recitation and departed from there..."^{vii}

When the Allamah was staying in Mecca he was away from his relatives and followers. But in spite of this he had not forsaken the welfare of the needy and the poor people, and the needs of the students.

One day his secretary told him that whatever cash was there is now finished and nothing now remains. He should now think seriously in this regard. Let us read the incident in the words of the assistant himself.

"The Sayed did not say anything in reply. It was his practice in Mecca to perform the *tawaf* in the morning then retire for sometime alone in a room. I used to prepare a Hookah for him and he smoked it daily. Afterwards he used to go to another room to give lecture to his students. On this particular day the Sayed heard a voice from outside. He became tense and restless. He told me to hide the hookah while he himself assumed the posture of a humble servant. He rushed to the door and opened it.

A respectful Arab gentleman entered and then went to the private chamber of the Sayed and seated himself. The Sayed followed him and sat down near him in a humble manner.

For an hour or so they conversed between themselves and then the respectful personality arose to depart. The Sayed stood up too, and led him to the door: then he kissed his hands and helped him mount the camel that was waiting outside.

The guest departed and the Sayed returned. But the color of his face had undergone a change. He gave me a promissory note, which was in his hand and said: Take this note to such and such shop owner who is a moneychanger at the Safa mountain and bring whatever he gives in lieu of it.

I took the promissory note and went to the moneychanger. He took the note and kissed it respectfully. Then he said: "Get some porters."

I brought four porters. The moneychanger loaded upon them as many moneybags as they could carry. Then we returned home.

One day I decided to go back to the moneychanger and investigate the matter and also find out about the person who had given the promissory note. I could not find any shop at that place. I enquired from a person about the moneychanger. He replied: "Such a moneychanger has never been seen in this place." Then I realized that this was one of the divine secrets and it was due to the favor and blessing of Hadhrat Hujjat (A.J).^{xviii}

This great scholar with the purity of his soul and *Taqwa*, had raised the curtain that separated him and Hadhrat Hujjat (A.J) to such an extent that it seemed as if he was spending his life in the company of Hadhrat (A.J). It is for this reason that Hadhrat (A.J) pours his affections upon such personalities who have freed themselves from selfish desires, in such a period when every man is busy with his own problems.

Sometimes the Allamah was able to hear the supplicating voice of Imam Zaman (A.J) and listen to the words emanating from his blessed lips. He even had the honor of meeting the Imam (A.J) at the cellar when no one else was around.

Peace be upon the one who was a much respected helper of his master...

10. SEEKING PERMISSION TO ENTER

The world famous Shi'a jurist who is considered by some to be the seal of *Fuqaha* was the late Sheikh Murtuza Ansari (R.A.) (1214-1281). His fame spreads to every country of the world where Shi'ahs exist. He was the descendant of the well-known companion of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A), Jabir Ibne Abdullah Ansari. Allamah Muhaddith-e-Noori writes about him thus: "The Almighty" Allah (SWT) favored Jabir in such a way that created among his descendants a personality who served his society as well as the faith by his knowledge, his

research and study, piety and worship and by his intellect and understanding."^{xx}

He was the supreme leader of Shi'ahs in his time and a faithful deputy of Imam (A.J). An ardent devotee of Hadhrat Vali-e-Asr (A.J), his attention never strayed away from Hadhrat (A.J)

One of his students has mentioned that one night in Karbala-Moalla he left his house with a lamp because it was pitch dark in the streets. The lanes were also paved with wet mud. I saw a figure at a distance. When I came near, I saw that he was my teacher, Shaikh Ansari (R.A.).

I became thoughtful on seeing him and wondered why he was out on the streets at this time of the night in spite of his weak vision and the dirt filled roads. I could not surmise where he was going, but followed him in case he was waylaid. After walking for quite sometime the Shaikh came upon a door. He stood before the door, recited *Ziarat-e-Jamea* with great respect and then entered the house.

After this I could not see anything. However I was able to hear the voice of the Shaikh as if he was in conversation with somebody.

After an hour when I entered the Haram of Imam Hussein (A.S). I saw that the Shaikh was also present there. A few days later when I met him, I tried to enquire about the happenings of that night. Upon my persistent questioning, he said: "Sometimes I seek the permission to be in company of Imams (A.S). I go to that particular house (which you can never find) and recite *Ziarat-e-Jamea*. When I

get permission the second time. I enter into the presence of Imam Zaman (A.J). Then I put difficult problems and questions to Hadhrat (A.J) and seek his help..."

Then the Shaikh took my promise that I will not mention the fact to anybody as long as he was alive."

Certainly the affectionate connection of Hadhrat (A.J) with his deputies is much more. We must consider these personalities to be the assistants of Hadhrat. Hadhrat is always attentive to them and helps them, whenever the need arises."^{xx}

We must also remember that Hadhrat not only helps his deputies and assistants, but he is also prepared to help even the ordinary people like us if we have love and attachment with the purified household (Ahlul Bayt). What is necessary is that there should not be any obstruction and secondly there must be the divine will in this regard. We must have a firm belief that if we continued to pass the stages of helping and companionship of Imam (A.J), he will not be deficient from his side in helping us...

11. FATWA TO BAN TOBACCO

Ayatollah Al Uzma Mirza Muhammad Hasan Shirazi (1230-1312) was a great jurist and *Marjae Taqleed*. He was well known for his verdict banning Tobacco. By this verdict he was able to counter the threat of powerful western countries. He also proved the spiritual

strength of Shiaism and was successful in subduing the power hungry Westerners.

It was the rule of the Qajar dynasty in Iran when the government officials were nothing but the puppets in the hands of the British. It was a period when the foreigners had monopoly in the fields of Banking, railways, tramways, steam engineering, minerals and logging.

It was a period when the East India Company had trapped Iran into an inescapable lair. It was a period when it was shamelessly endeavored to exhort as much bribe as possible from the foreign companies and allow them to suck the blood of the common people.

It was a period of blatant over-trading in tobacco and the trading rights were given away at a pal" price to the British. Thus the native population was deprived of this occupation (of trading in tobacco). It was a period of depression.

The war began. The Ulama rose up and most of the towns faced economic collapse.

The people faced utter bankruptcy and the agitations began. The pious and the knowledgeable people took up the responsibility of leadership and the grace of Imam Zaman (A.J) provided the historical commandment:

◌In the Name Of Allah The Beneficent and the Merciful "From today the use of tobacco in any way what so ever is equal to making war upon Imam Zaman (A.J)"◌^{vi}

The concise command acted like a knife for the enemies and like an ointment for the wounded populace. The enemies whether British or the Russians who had bribed the government learnt such a bitter lesson that even if the people had again become complacent they would not have dared to strike again.^{xvii}

Let us now examine this special grace of Imam Zaman (A.J) which he bestowed upon his deputy.

Imam Zaman (A.J) And The Order To Issue The Fatwa

Sayyed Husain Haacri, the nephew of the Late Sayyed Muhammad Fishaarki (May Allah (SWT) be pleased with him) says that after the Fatwa was issued the Mirza was flooded with thousands of letters and telegrams from far and near. All of them presented varying opinions. Some were of the view that the British government will retaliate and this may result in the Mirza's martyrdom. Some wrote to support the Fatwa and added that it should be enforced immediately. Public meetings were held everywhere outside the house of Mirza. Various scholars and intellectuals debated the pros and cons of the same and presented their personal views in writing. Mirza used to accept their memorandum and retire to his private chamber to study them.

The days passed but the Mirza did not take any action. One day a student of Mirza by the name of Sayyed who belonged to the group that favored the Fatwa sought permission for a special meeting in this

regard. In the beginning he told Mirza to keep aside the rights of the teacher and student. When the permission was granted he expressed absolute grief and said in a serious tone, "What are you waiting for? Are you frightened of being killed? It would be a great honor for all of us if our teacher attains martyrdom while defending the religion.

When the Sayyed had completed his argument the Mirza said, "I wanted it to be written by someone else. I had gone to the sacred cellar today. When I saw an illumined face, I wrote down and dispatched it."^{xviii}

This incident was related by Ayatollah Al Haj Sheikh Murtuza from Late Sayyed Husain Haaeri who was one of the trustworthy scholars.

Certainly that Imam (A.J) is never found wanting when a devotee seeks his help so how can he, betray the community?

Has he not remarked, "Certainly we are never neglectful of your affairs and we never forget your remembrance".

12. OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE ONLY THROUGH US, AHLUL, BAYT (A.S)

The Late Ayatollah Al Uzma Agha Mirza Muhammad Mahdi Isfahani (R.A) (1303-1365) was one of the well-known scholars of the last decades. He was a spiritual leader as well as a jurist. He was a great spiritual and moral influence for years upon the *Hauz-e-Ilmia* of Mashhad. This was because all his life he stood like a firm barrier

against narrow-mindedness and deviations. He considered the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of Ahlul Bayt (A.S) to be the true source of Islam.

Most of the present Shi'a scholars and religious leaders had been his students. They have always followed his teachings.

All the celebrations and functions that we see on the occasion of the birth of the present Imam, Imam Zaman (A.J) are due to the patronage of this great scholar. It was he who had provided a spark and it resulted in the great illuminations of this joyous occasion.

When this great teacher was himself a student all kinds of schools of thoughts had penetrated the academic world. This scenario confused him to a great extent. Being a revolutionary thinker he could not decide upon the direction that he should take for spiritual advancement. At last he prayed to Hadhrat Vali Asr (A.J) and sought his help to find a way for him.

Hadhrat (A.J) also honored him by his presence when he was in, Wadi-us-Salaam, Najaf sitting near the graves of Prophet Hud (A.S) and Prophet Saleh (A.S). Hadhrat (A.J) met him and guided him too... When he called Imam (A.J) for help with his eyes filled with tears he was rewarded with the visit from Imam (A.J). He not only had the honor of seeing the Imam (A.J) with his own eyes but he was also cured of the disease of indecision.

When he awoke and looked at Hadhrat (A.J) he saw a green band on the chest of Imam (A.J). It was 20 centimeters wide and 40

centimeters long. Inscribed upon it in luminous white were the following words.

"Seeking Knowledge from sources other than Ahlul Bayt (A.S) is equivalent to denying us. And certainly I am established at present by Sallah. And I am the Hujjat, the son of Hasan (al-Askari) (A.S)"

The word 'Hujjat Ibnul Hasan' was inscribed like a signature. After this the Imam (A.J) disappeared from his sight. The timely message of Hadhrat (A.J) served like an ointment for his burnt heart. The correct path become manifest to him. After this event of having been honored by the clear guidance of Imam (A.J), the respected scholar never referred to him by any other title except the title of "Master Of All Sciences."

The profound lesson of Imam (A.J) became the torch of guidance for his way.

The message was clear. Imam said "whatever knowledge you desire, obtain it from us." Whether it is the knowledge of Allah (SWT), the knowledge of your own self, the knowledge of this world, or the Hereafter, follow my instructions and me. After this the Late Ayatollah came to Iran. In Iran he began to teach religious students through a method purely based on the Qur'an and the traditions of Ahlul Bayt. His sole endeavor was to keep alive the knowledge and recognition of Ahlul Bayt (A.S) The writings of the knowledgeable Ayatollah are still treasured by some of his students...^{xxiv}

13. WE DO HELP YOU!

One of the honorable Ulama of the Shi'a community who also had the honor of meeting directly with Hadhrat Mahdi (A.J), is Ayatollah Al Uzma Agha Sayyed Abu Hasan Isfahani (died 1365). He was the *Marja-e-Taqlid* and an erudite scholar of Shi'a Islam.

Throughout the period of major occultation very few people can be found equaling him in magnanimity, piety and service to religion.

One of his great distinction is the '*Tawqee*' that Imam (A.J) sent to him. In this way Imam (A.J) proved that he was under his guidance and also assisted by him. Hadhrat (A.J) had blessed him by his invaluable attention.

The trustworthy scholar of Muslims and the most righteous among the intellectuals Haj Shah Muhammad Kufi Shustari was the medium through whom the following letter was received:

"Tell him: Make yourself freely available to the people (so that people can meet you whenever they desire) sit at your doorstep (so that people can contact you easily), Fulfil the needs of the people, we shall continue to help you. " The whole thing has been said in one single sentence: "We shall help you".

Our master Hadhrat Vali Asr (A.J..) has proved this time and again throughout the history of Shiaism. He has always helped and assisted his general deputies (*Naeib-e-Aam*) and was always thoughtful

of their affairs. Holding their hands he has guided them during difficult circumstances.

The period of major occultation is replete with ups and downs for the Muslims, when they spent their lives in separation from their near ones. But the Imam remains present in the society. Of course, when the individuals in the Muslim society, cross the limitations of the straight path by their intentions and actions and leave aside the laws and regulations to reach the leader, the Imam (A.J), then the path separating the Imam (A.J), which is in itself wide, becomes even wider.

But when he tries to tread the footsteps of his master with great deliberation, the way becomes easy. He is able to cover the distance like a swift bird and achieves success and salvation.

The great Imam (A.J) imparts strength of belief and creates a desire for meeting him in the hearts of those who await him ardently.

We must not think that miracles of Imam (A.J) are only limited to these incidents. These are only a few examples that we have quoted for you. Apart from these there are numerous instances of his bestowals. So much so that even the hopelessness and despair of the people is changed into a hopeful attitude.

Can we ever forget those examples where Hadhrat (A.J) bestowed his mercy and bounties upon such people who led a life of sensuousness and vices; but later decided to mend their ways and returned to the right path?

The incident of Shaikh Hasan Iraqi is the best example of this kind.^{www}

Can we ignore those incidents where Hadhrat has provided timely help to those who were separated from their fellow travelers and lost in the desert? Hadhrat could not bear to see them in this condition and hence freed them from their enemies. He removed their difficulties and solved their problems. (for example Najmus Saqib Part Seven Incident nos. 3, 7, 8, 14, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 38, 39, 44, 47, 55, 62, 67, 69, 70, 71, 76, 83, 95, 97).

We have seen those anecdotes where Hadhrat (A.J) prayed to Allah (SWT) for the cure of the diseased persons and procured the treatment of the maladies. (Najmus Saqib Part I Incident nos. 4, 5, 6, 9, 41, 42, 43, 45, 48, 60, 61, 63, 82)

Have we forgotten the precious sayings and guidance for our day-to-day life? But the Imams (A.S) bestowed upon us? (Najmus Saqib, part seven, Incident nos. 10, 42, 71, 98)

Have we not heard of the countless occasions where Imam (A.J) honored the common people with his audience and specially the religious leaders? (Najmus Saqib Part Seven incident nos. 12, 13, 32, 33, 34, 36, 56, 57, 59, 64, 65, 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 84, 85, 86, 87, 90, 91, 93, 99, 100)

We can never ignore the fact that our Imam (A.J) is really merciful, and he cannot bear to see the sorrow of his followers. Whenever they call him for help, he rushes to their call and provides

his assistance. He never forgets his people. Hence it is our duty to call him with sincerity so that he can respond. by the permission of Allah (SWT).

(14) THE DESTINATION OF THE SUN

This is our journey, which we began towards Allah (SWT) with the intention of *Hijrat*. We have taken a draught from the spring of *Marefat* and attached ourselves with the Imam (A.J). The final destination of the sun is before us.

As far as *ghaihat* is concerned, it is due to our own self. The only remedy is repentance. Repentance means turning towards Allah (SWT) with the sincerity of intention to express our respect and our failure to perform our duties properly.

We should seek Allah's (SWT) forgiveness, and in order to achieve the best of our remaining life we should strive to seek instructions from Him. But it is necessary to know that a true repentance is one, which is accompanied by a sincere intention, the one which makes the "pure life" to prepare for the satisfied soul.

However the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) had declared that command in the words of the Almighty and many of his followers take it as their guide for salvation.

"Say I do not ask from you any recompense for this except the love of the nearest kin."(Sura Shuraa 42:23)

It is surprising; the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) is asking the people to love his kindred as a recompense of his labors in conveying the divine message? Is he asking something for himself?

"Say! Whatever I ask you, as recompense is not for myself. It is for your own good. My recompense is not but upon the (Almighty)

Allah." (Surah Saba 34: 47)

Is it possible for anyone to repay the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) for a single minute spent by his holy mission? What do we possess that we can give to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A)?

Whatever we have is only due to them (A.S). Everything is the result of the bounty of their existence, because they are the best of the creatures. Allah (SWT) has created the whole universe in the love of these personalities. These exalted personages have not associated anyone with Allah (SWT) even for a moment. So why can't they be deserving of Allah's (SWT) absolute love. Why should their way not be the way of salvation? Hence why should the people not be ordered to love and revere them?

Who else can benefit from their love and reverence? What other provision can we collect for the Hereafter rather than support them with our minds as well as our hands. Because to support them is one of the best deeds as they themselves are a model of piety and worship of Allah (SWT).

It is for this reason that loving them is beneficial for our own self. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) desires to provide his Ummat with other springs of grace.

"Say, I do not ask for this any recompense except from the who wishes to take the path towards his Lord." (Furqan 25: 57)

At this juncture let us review the saying of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) when he said to the following effect.

"O People! If you wish to pay me back for the labors that I undertook to bring you the message, a recompense which would revert to you and become a way of guidance for you and save you from deviation, moreover it will also please me; I only wish that you love and befriend my Ahlul Bayt."

Let us examine some of the points conveyed in these statements.

What is "recompense"? "Recompense" is something that is given in return for the right to use a particular thing. Till the thing is paid for, it cannot be legitimate to use it. It is not possible to benefit from a thing till one has not paid the due.

It is necessary to pay this due so that we can achieve nearness to Allah (SWT) and satisfy Him.

To achieve the divine law, which the Prophet (S.A.W.A) has brought, we must first pay the due.

Even if we summarize the teachings of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) into the following Divine qualities mentioned in the Qur'an

"The Greatest, the Most Powerful, the Ever-present, the Light, the Truth, the Wise, the Merciful. Even then we cannot hope to attain these qualities till we fulfill the injunction of *"loving the nearest relatives."* "Say: I do not ask from you any recompense except the love of my nearest kindred."

The *"nearest kin"*, mentioned in this verse, are, according to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A): Imam Ali (A.S), Fatemah Zahra (S.A.) and their two virtuous sons Imam Hasan (A.S) and Imam Hussein (A.S).

On the basis of this, the love of these personages is the factor that perfects the faith of a person. Many of the Ahle Sunnat scholars have also recorded this.^{xxx}

The word *"Muwaddat"* is derived from *"wadd"* and *"wadd"* means extreme love. This word *Muwaddat* denotes extra-ordinary love and we must pay attention to this fact. We must also note the fact that when we love a particular person the following things become incumbent upon us:

- a. We must know his characteristics, specialties, merits and all things relevant to him.
- b. We must keep on increasing our love for him.
- c. We must publicize our love among the people and elevate the remembrance of our beloved and call the people towards him.

d. We must obey his commands and we must avoid those things that he has prohibited for us. Actually our love for the Ahlul Bayt (A.S) is based on obedience.

e. We should wait for the reappearance of Hadhrat (A.J) and we must pray for his early reappearance.

f. We must help and assist his followers, the Shi'ahs and other helpers of Imam (A.J).

g. We must oppose his enemies and those who oppose his mission. (Refer the book Mikyalul Makarim Vol. 11 for a detailed analysis of the duties during the ghaibat of Imam A.J.)

We must always strive to increase love for him and our aim should be the zenith and that is the destination of the sun.

Peace be upon Mahdi (A.J), the one regarding whom Allah (SWT) has promised the people.

Notes:

¹ Beharul Anwaar Vol. 53. Pg. No. 178-180. from 'Al-Ihtijaj'

² Tawqee of Hadhrat Vali Al-Asr (A.J) addressed to Shaikh Mufeed (R.A.) Beharul Anwaar Vol. 53. Pgs.175-177. Quote from Al Ihtijaj

³ Taken from Ziarat of Imam Zaman (A.J) which is recited on Friday 'Mafatihul Jinan'

⁴ Mikyalul Makarim Vol.2. Pg.160

⁵ Wasaelush Shia Vol.18 Pg.95. Beharul Anwaar Vol.2 Pg.88

⁶ Ref.: Kamaluddin Pg.484. Beharul Anwaar Vol.53. Pg. 181. Wasaelush Shia Vol.18 Pg.101

⁷ Ref. Shaikh Taifah

⁸ Supplication that the pilgrims recite at the Black Stone

⁹ Introduction to the book Kamaluddin by Shaikh Sadooq. Farsi (Persian) Translation Published in two volumes.)

[^] Al-Ihtijaj, Allamah Tabarsi. pg. 322 onwards

[^] Bar Namae Saadat. Part 147

^{^^} Rawzatul Jannaat, Vol.2. Pg.282. Jannatul Maawa incident no. 22. Najmus Saqib incident no. 15

^{^^^} From the book "Those who were successful in the Search for Qa'im A.J. pgs. 27, 30

^{^^^} Nawaduz Rizwiya Pg. 139-446

^{^^} Najmus Saqib Incident no. 61, Jannatul Maawa Incident no. 3-8

^{^^} Fawailul Rizvia Pg. 679

^{^^} Najmus Saqib Incident no. 79, Jannatul Maawa Incident no.45

^{^^^} Najmus Saqib Incident no. 76, Jannatul Maawa Incident 12, Fawaidur Rizvia Pg. 280

^{^^} Al-Mustadrak

^{^^} Murtuza Ansari. Pg. 105-107

^{^^} Paikaar Peerooz Tambakoo, Mohammed Nehawandyan Pg. 56

^{^^^} Ibid Pg. 125-134

^{^^^} Ref.: Shaykh Murtuza Haaeri

^{^^^} Quoted from Deen-e-Fitrat Vol. 1

^{^^} Kashful Astar-Mirza Husain Tabrasi Noori Part 1 Pg. 18

^{^^^} Some of the Shia writers have based their works upon material from the authoritative Sunni books.



TRADITIONS OF THE AHL-E-SUNNAH IN REGARDS TO THE MAHDI (A.J)

*“And he shall be a Sign for (the coming of) the Hour”
(Qur'an 43:61)*

From our Ahl-e-Sunnah brothers, there are six authentic collections of traditions based on the Ahl-e-Sunnah standards for verifying the authenticity of a tradition. These six books are: Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sahih al-Tirmidhi, Sunan Ibn Majah, Sunan Abu Dawud, and Sahih al-Nisa'i.

The following are only some of the traditions out of many, about Imam Mahdi (A.J), and are traditions that the Ahl-e-Sunnah agrees to their authenticity and existence.

In a tradition upon whose authenticity all Muslims agree, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) has said:

"Even if the entire duration of the world's existence has already been exhausted and only one day is left before Doomsday (Day of judgment), Allah will expand that day to such a length of time, as to accommodate the kingdom of a person out of my Ahlul-Bayt who will be called by my name. He will then fill out the earth with peace and justice as it will have been full of injustice and tyranny (by then)."

Reference:

1. Sahih Tirmidhi, V2, P86, V9, PP 74-75
2. Sanan Abi Dawud, V2, P7
3. Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, V1, P376 & V3, P63
4. Mustadrak al-Sahihain, by al-Hakim, V4, P557
5. Al-Majma', by Tabarani, P217
6. Tahdhib al-Thabit, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, V9, P144
7. al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Ch. 11, section 1, P249/li]
8. Kanz al-Ummal, v7 P186
9. Iqd al-Durar Fi Akhbar al-Mahdi al-Muntadhar, v12, Ch. 1,
10. al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman, By Ganji al-Shafi'i, Ch. 12
11. al-Fusool al-Muhimmah, by Ibn Sabbagh al-Maliki, Ch. 12
12. Fathul Bari, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, V7, P305
13. al-Tathkirah, by al-Qurtubi, P617
14. al-Hawi, by al-Suyuti, V2. pp165-166
15. Sharh al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyyah, by al-Zurqani, V5, P348
16. Fathul Mughith, by al-Sakhawi, V3, P41

17. Arjahul Matalib, by Ubaidallah Hindi al-Hanafi, p380
18. Muqaddimah. by Ibn Khaldoon, p266
19. Jami' al-Saghir, by al-Suyuti, pp 2,160
20. al-Urful Wardi, by al-Suyuti, p2
21. al-Shafi'i (d. 363/974). (Who said the above hadith is related by numerous authorities and was spread far and wide by many narrators). And is found also in the works of Ibn Habban, Abu Nua'ym, Ibn Asakir, etc.

The Prophet (S.A.W.A) said:

"Al-Mahdi is one of us, the members of the household (Ahlul-Bayt)."

Reference:

Sunan Ibn Majah, V2, Tradition #4085.

As we see Imam Mahdi (A.J) is from the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.A), so he cannot be Jesus (A.S) (the Messiah; *al-Maseeh*). Mahdi (A.J) and Messiah are two different personalities but they come at the same time, Mahdi (A.J) as Imam and Jesus as his follower. The following tradition clearly mentions that Imam Mahdi (A.J) is one of the children of the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.A).

The Messenger of Allah said:

"Al-Mahdi is one of the children of Fatemah (the Prophet's daughter)."

Reference:

1. Sunan Ibn Majah. V2, Tradition #4086
2. al-Nisa'i and al-Bayhaqi. and others as quoted in: al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Ch. 11, section 1. p249

The Prophet (S.A.W.A) said:

"We the children of Abd Al-Mutalib are the Masters of the inhabitants of Heaven: Myself, Hamza, Ali, Jafar, Hasan, Hussein, and Al-Mahdi."

Reference:

1. Sunan Ibn Majah, V2, Tradition #4087.
2. al-Mustadrak, by al-Hakim, on the authority of Anas Ibn Malik
3. al-Daylami
4. al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah. by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Ch. 11, section 1, p245

The Prophet (S.A.W.A) said:

"The Mahdi will appear in my Ummah. He will appear for a minimum of 7 or a maximum of 9 years; in that time, my Ummah will experience a bountiful favor like never before. It shall have a great abundance of food, of which it need not save anything, and the wealth at that time is in great quantities, such that if a man asks the Mahdi to give him some, the Mahdi will say: Here! Take!"

Reference:

Sunan Ibn Majah. V2. Tradition #5083¹

The Prophet (S.A.W.A) said:

"We (I and my family) are members of a household that Allah (SWT) has chosen for them the life of the Hereafter over the life of this world; and the members of my household (Ahlul-Bayt) shall suffer a great affliction and they shall be forcefully expelled from their homes after my death: then there will come people from the East carrying black flags, and they will ask for some good to be given to them, but they shall be refused service; as such, they will wage war and emerge victorious, and will be offered that which they desired in the first place, but they will refuse to accept it, until a man from my family (Ahlul-Bayt) appears to fill the Earth with justice as it has been filled with corruption. So whoever reaches that (time) ought to come to them even if crawling on the ice/snow."

Reference:

1. Sunan Ibn Majah, V2, Tradition #4082
2. The History Tabari (Tareekh Tabari). 3.al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar, Ch. 11, section 1, pp 250-251.

In Sahih Muslim, in the Chapter of al-Fitan, there are some interesting traditions on what will happen in the last days of the world. Two of them are quoted below:

Abu Nadra reported: We were with the company of Jabir Ibn Abdillah... Jabir Ibn Abdillah kept quiet for a while and then reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) having said: "There would be a Caliph in the last (period) of my Ummah who would freely

give handfuls of wealth to the people without counting it." I said to Abu Nadra and Abu al-Ala: Do you mean Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz? They said: NO, (he would be Imam Mahdi)².

References:

1. Sahih Muslim, English version, v4. chapter MCCV. p1508, Tradition #6961.
2. Sahih Muslim, Arabic version, Kitab al-Fitan. v4. p2234, Tradition #67.

It is also narrated that the Prophet said:

"In the end of the time, my Ummah will undergo very hard affliction like never before, so that man can not find any way out. Then Allah will appear a person from my progeny, that is my Ahlul-Bayt. who will fill the earth with justice as it was filled with injustice. The inhabitants of the earth and the inhabitants of the heaven love him. The sky will bring down its water everywhere and the earth will bring all what it can offer and will become green all over."

References:

Al-Sahih fi al-Hadith, by al-Hakim, as quoted in: al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Ch. 11, section 1, p250

The Messenger of Allah said:

"The world will not perish until a man among the Arabs appears whose name matches my name."

Reference:

Sahih Tirmidhi, V9, P74

The Messenger of Allah said:

"Mahdi from my family will bring about a revolution and will fill the world with justice and equity before which it was filled up with injustice and inequity."

References:

1. Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, V1, P84
2. Jami'us Sagheer. by al-Suyuti. PP 2.160
3. al-Urful Vardi. by al-Suyuti, P2
4. Kanzul Ummal, V7 P186
5. Aqd al-Durar Fi Akhbaar al-Mahdi al-Muntazir, V12, Chapter 1,
6. al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman. By Ganji Shafi'i. Chapter 12
7. al-Fusool al-Muhimmah. by Ibn Sabbagh Maliki, Chapter 12
8. Arjahul Matalib. by Ubaidallah Hindi hanafi, P380
9. Muqaddimah. by Ibn Khaldoon, P266

One of the four Imams of Ahle Sunnah, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal narrated that the Prophet (S.A.W.A) said:

"Allah will bring out from concealment Mahdi from my Family and Progeny before the Day of Judgment, even if only one day were to remain in the life of the world, and he will spread on this earth justice and equity and eradicate tyranny and oppression."

Reference:

1. Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v1, p99
2. A close version has also been narrated in Sunan Abu Dawud, English version, Ch. 36, Tradition #4270 narrated from Ali Ibn Abi Talib (AS).

Ibn Majah in his Sunan quotes Mohammad Ibn Hanafiyyah and Imam Ali saying that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A) said:

"Mahdi is from our Ahlul-Bayt, no doubt Allah will enforce his appearance within a night (i.e., his coming is very unpredictable and is very sudden)."

Reference:

1. Sunan Ibn Majah, V2, P269
2. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, as quoted in:
3. al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Ch. 11, section 1, p250

It is narrated that Ali Ibn Abi Talib (A.S) said:

"When the 'Support' of the family of Muhammad (al-Qa'im Aale Muhammad) rises Allah will unite the people of east and the people of west."

References:

1. Ibn Asakir, as quoted in:

2. al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Ch. 11. section 1. p252

Ibn Hajar wrote that:

Muqatil Ibn Sulayman and those who followed him among the (Ahl-e-Sunnah) commentators of Qur'an said that the verse: *"And he shall be a Sign for (the coming of) the Hour"* (Qur'an 43:61) was revealed about al-Mahdi.

Reference:

al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar, Ch. 11, section 1, p247

It is narrated in Sahih Muslim that: Jabir Ibn Abdillah al-Ansari (RA) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah saying:

"A group of my Ummah will fight for the truth until near the day of judgment when Jesus, the son of Marry, will descend, and the leader of them will ask him to lead the prayer, but Jesus declines, saying: "No, Verily, among you Allah has made leaders for others and He has bestowed his bounty upon them."

Reference:

1. Sahih Muslim, Arabic, part 2, p193
2. Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v3, pp 45,384
3. al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Ch. 11, section 1, p251

4. Nuzool Isa Ibn Maryam Akhir al-Zaman. by Jalaluddin al-Suyuti.

p57

5. Musnad. by Abu Ya'ala which provides another version of the tradition with more clearer words on the authority of Jabir that the Messenger of Allah said: "A group among my Ummah will continue to fight for the truth until Jesus, the son of Mary, will descend, and the Imam of them will ask him to lead the prayer, but Jesus replies: "You have more right to it, and verily Allah has honored some of you over others in this Ummah."

6. Sahih Ibn Habban, whose tradition reads: "their leader al-Mahdi" and the rest of the tradition is the same.

Ibn Abu Shaybah, another Ahl-e-Sunnah traditionist, and the mentor of Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim has reported several traditions about Imam al-Mahdi (A.J). He has also reported that the Imam of the Muslims who will lead Prophet Jesus in prayer is Imam al-Mahdi himself.

Jalaluddin al-Suyuti mentioned that:

"I have heard some of the deniers of (truth) deny what has been conveyed about Jesus that when he descends will pray the Fajr prayer behind al-Mahdi. They say, Jesus has higher status than to pray behind a non-Prophet. This is a bizarre opinion since the issue of prayer of

Jesus behind al-Mahdi has been proven strongly via numerous authentic traditions from the Messenger of Allah, who is the most truthful."

And then al-Suyuti goes on narrating some of the traditions in this regard.

Reference:

Nuzool Isa Ibn Maryam Akhir al-Zaman. by Jalaluddin al-Suyuti, p56

Al-Hafidh Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani mentioned that:

"The Mahdi is of this Ummah, and that Jesus will come down and pray behind him."

Reference:

Fat'h al-Bari, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v5, p362

Another scholar from the Ahl-e-Sunnah, Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, also mentions this:

"The Ahlul-Bayt are like the stars through whom we are guided in the right direction, and if the stars are taken away (or hidden) we would come face to face with the signs of the Almighty as promised (i.e., the Day of Resurrection). This will happen *when* the Mahdi will come, as mentioned in the traditions, and the Prophet Jesus will say his prayers behind him. the Dajjal will be slain, and then the signs of the Almighty will appear one after another."

Reference:

al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar, Ch. 11, section 1, p234

Ibn Hajar quoted Abu al-Husain al-Ajiri saying:

The traditions of al-Mustafa (S.A.W.A.) on the rising of al-Mahdi has been transmitted via numerous authorities and is more than the level of (being sufficient for) Mutawatir, describing that he is of his Ahlul-Bayt, and will fill the earth with justice, and that Jesus (A.S) will come at the same time and he will assist Jesus for killing al-Dajjal in the land of Palestine, and that he will lead this nation and Jesus will pray behind him.

Reference:

Abu al-Husain al-Ajiri as quoted in al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar, Ch. 11, section 1, p254

Al-Hafidh Muhammad Ibn Ali al-Shawkani (d. 1250/1834) wrote in a book called "*al-Tawdhih fi twawatur ma jaa'a fil muntadar wad-djjal wal masih*" the explanation about the frequent reports concerning the Awaited one, the Dajjal, and the messiah) in which he wrote about Imam al-Mahdi (A.J) that: The traditions about al-Mahdi have been related by numerous authorities and are therefore reliable beyond doubt or confusion, because in jurisprudence the qualification of *Mutawatir* is valid even for (traditions) with less than this number of narrations. There are also many sayings of the companions (of the Prophet) which explicitly mention the Mahdi, which have the status of narrations from the Prophet since there is no question of establishing

such saying through *Ijtihad* (one's opinion and research)". The author gives the same opinion in his other book "*al-Fat'h al-Rabbani*". (In this connection see also "*Mawsu'atil Imam al-Mahdi*", v1, pp 391-392, 413-414, 434, and also "*Tuhfatul Ahwadh*"i, v6, p485).

The author of the book, "*Ghayah al-Ma'amool*," mentioned that: "It is a famous narration among the Scholars of the past and the present that there has to appear a man from the family of the Prophet (S.A.W.A) named al-Mahdi. In addition, the traditions about the Mahdi have been narrated by the most renowned companions of the Prophet (S.A.W.A), as well as by the most renowned scholars such as Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, al-Tabarani, Abu Ya'ala, al-Bazzar, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, and al-Hakim (May Allah be pleased with them all); furthermore, those who claim that the traditions narrated with regard to the appearance of the Mahdi are weak, are themselves in error."

Al-Saban in his book, "*Is'af al-Raghibeen*," mentioned that: "The news about the appearance of the Mahdi are traceable back to the Prophet (S.A.W.A), and that he is one of the members of the family of the Prophet (S.A.W.A); and that he will fill the Earth with justice."

Al-Suwaydi in his book, "*Saba'iq al-Dhahab*," reported that: "The scholars have a consensus that the Mahdi (A.J) will appear at the end of time and fill the Earth with justice; and the traditions supporting his appearance are indeed numerous."

Al-Hafidh Abul-Hasan Muhammad Ibn al-Husain al-Sijistani al-Aburi al-Shafi'i (d. 363/974) said: "The traditions were related by numerous authorities and were spread far and wide by many narrators, from al-Mustafa (S.A.W.A) concerning al-Mahdi who is from the household (of the Prophet) and who will fill the world with justice..."

The subsequent scholars accepted this statement:

1. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani - Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, v9, p144; Fat'h al-Bari, v7, p305
2. Al-Qurtubi - Al-Tathkirah, p617
3. Al-Suyuti - Al-Hawi, v2, pp 165-166
4. Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi - Al Burhan fi Alamat Mahdi Akhir al-Zaman, pp 175-176
5. Ibn Hajar al-Haythami - Al Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, Ch. 11, section 1, p249
6. Al-Zurqani (Sharh al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyyah, v5, p348
7. Al-Sakhawi (Fat'h al-Mugheeth, v3, p41, etc

The best formulation of the belief of all Muslims about Imam Mahdi (A.J) has been given by a person who himself did not believe in his coming and who denied the validity of the traditions concerning this matter. He was Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406), a famous historian, who in whose book, "*al-Muqaddamah*," wrote:

"Let it be known that it is a narrated event by ALL Muslims in EVERY era, that at the end of time a man from the family of the

Prophet will, without fail, make his appearance and will strengthen Islam and spread justice; Muslims will follow him and he will gain domination over the Muslim realm. He will be called al-Mahdi." (An Introduction to History, by Ibn Khaldun, English version, London, 1967 Edition, pp 257-258)

The above quote proves that even Ibn Khaldun was in the opinion that the belief in Imam al-Mahdi was not a characteristic of a special sect of Islam, but was a common belief to ALL Muslims.

Most Ahl-e-Sunnah scholars openly criticized those elements who tried to cast doubt the traditions about al-Mahdi (A.J), and have strongly asserted that the belief in Mahdi (A.J) is well-established for ALL Muslims.

Reference:

1. "Awnul Ma'bud" (which is the commentary of Sunan Abu Dawud), by Al-Azimabadi, v11, pp 361-362,
2. "Tuhfatul Ahwadhi" (which is the commentary of Sahih al-Tirmidhi), by al-Mubarakfuri, v6, p484,
3. "Al-Tajul Jami' lil Usul", by Shaikh Mansoor Ali Nasif, v5, p341.

Shaikh Ahmad Muhammad Shakir (d. 1377/1958), one of the greatest contemporary scholar of Hadith and Tafsir, whose major work was his commentary on Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal wrote in his commentary: "Belief in al-Mahdi is not particular to the Shia because it is from the narration of many companions of the Prophet in such way that NO one can cast doubt the truth (of this belief)."

After this, he proceeds to a strong refutation of Ibn Khaldun's weakening the traditions regarding al-Mahdi.

Reference:

Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal with commentary of Ahmad Muhammad Shakir, Pub. by Dar al-Ma'arif, Egypt, v5, pp 196-198, v14, p288). For a biography of Ahmad Shakir, see al-Aalam, v1, p253; Mu'jam al-Mu'allifeen, v13, p368

Al-Sayid Sabiq, the Mufti for the "Muslim Brotherhood", in his book, *"al-Aqa'id al-Islamiyyah,"* that: "The idea about the Mahdi is indeed valid, and is one of the Islamic tenets that one must believe in." Mr. Sabiq also narrated a variety of traditions relating to the appearance of al-Mahdi (A.J) in the above book.

Two Shafi'i scholars. Ganji in his book *"al-Bayan"*, and Shablanji in his book *"Noor al-Absar"*, on the verse 48:28 of Qur'an: *"He is the One who sent his Messenger (Muhammad) with the guidance and the true religion that in order to prevail over all the religions"* narrated from Sa'id Ibn Jubair that "this promise to Prophet Muhammad will be fulfilled by al-Mahdi who is in the progeny of Fatemah (S.A.)."

Even Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), who is acclaimed by the Wahhabi, wrote in his book *"Minhaj al-Sunnah"* (v4, pp 211-212) that the traditions concerning the Mahdi (A.J) are certainly reliable, and his student, al-Dhahabi, conformed this in his summary of his teacher's book.

Reference:

Mukhtasar Minhaj al-Sunnah, pp 533-534.

A more recent Fatwa in regards to this issue was given in Mecca by the Muslim World League (*Rabitatul 'Alamul Islami*) on Oct. 11, 1976 (23 Shawwal 1396). This fatwa states that more than twenty companions narrated traditions concerning al-Mahdi (A.J), and gives a list of those scholars of Hadith who have transmitted these narrations, and those who have written books on al-Mahdi (A.J). The fatwa states: "The memorizers (Huffadh) and scholars of Hadith have verified that there are authentic (Sahih) and acceptable (Hasan) reports among the traditions related to al-Mahdi. The majority of these traditions are related through numerous authorities (Mutawatir). There is no doubt that the statuses of those reports are Sahih and Mutawatir. (They have also verified) that the belief in Mahdi is obligatory, and that it is one of the beliefs of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'a. Only those ignorant of the Sunnah and innovators in doctrine deny it."

Reference:

◦For the transcription and reproduction of this Fatwa, see, among others, the Introduction of al-Ganji al-Shafi'i, in the book named "al-Bayan," Beirut, 1399/1979, pp 76-79.

More Traditions from Ahl e Sunnah Scholars about Imam Mahdi (A.J)

Sheikh Khawaja Mohammed Parsa Naqashbandi's³ statement:

"Abu Mohammed Al-Hasan Al-Askari (A.S) is from Ahl-e-Bait (A.S). He (A.S) died on 6th of Rabi-ul-Awal 260 Hijri, which was a Friday, and got buried next to his father (A.S). He (A.S) lived for six years after the demise of his father (A.S), and he left behind only one son, Abu Al-Qasim Mohammed (A.J), who is the awaited savior. The awaited savior (A.J) was born on 15 Shaban, 255 Hijri, and his (A.J) mother's name was Narjis (R.A). When he (A.J) was five years old, his father Imam Al-Hasan Al-Askari (A.S) died."

"Syeda Hakima (R.A) bint Abu-Jafar Mohammed-bin-Jawad (A.S), who was the aunt of Imam Hasan Al-Askari (A.S), said that, "On 15 Shaban 255 Hijri I was at the house of Imam Hasan Al-Askari and he (A.S) asked me to stay at their home. At the time of *Fajar* prayers, I saw Narjis (R.A) in pain and I saw a newborn baby who was very clean. Imam Hasan Al-Askari (A.S) raised him in his arms and recited *Adhan* in his right ear and *Aqamah* in his left ear, after which he said to me. "Aunt, this new born is the awaited savior"."

Reference:

Fasal-al khitab, page 443 and 447, Published Tasqant

(The real name of the above-mentioned book is "Lamah Alamat-ul-Awaliya"; Imam Ahl-e-Sunnah Allama Shah Mohammed Ashraf Ali Thanvi,

who was a scholar of the Deoband order, did the Urdu translation of the book.)

Al Sheikh Al Arif Imam Abdul Wahab-bin-Ahmed-bin-Ali's statement: "The condition for Qiyamah includes the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (A.J), appearance of Dajjal, sudden appearance of many new diseases, sunset from the west, disappearance of Qur'an, appearance and victory of Gog and Magog." After this he says, "These events would occur... and that is the time when Imam Mahdi's (A.S) reappearance is expected, who is the son of Imam Hasan Al-Askari (A.S), and was born on 15th Shaban, 255 hijri and is till alive, and would end up meeting Isa-ibn-Maryam (A.S)..."

Reference:

AlYawaqiat Wa AlJawahir fi Aqaid AlAkbar, 2nd Edition, Page 127

Imam Ahl-e-Sunnah Husain Diyar Bukri's statement:

"Imam Mohammed-ibn-Hasan-ibn-Ali-ibn-Hasan-Ibn-Ali (Peace be upon them all) is the twelfth Imam. Abu Al Qasim is his title, and according to 12er Shi'ahs, his titles also include Al Qa'im, Al Mahdi, Al Muntazir and Sahib-ul-Asr Wa Az Zaman, and according to them, he is the last and twelfth Imam. Also, they believe that he entered a well, at Sarman Rai, in front of his mother, and never came back out again. This incidence happened in 265 or 266 Hijri, and this incidence is true. His (A.J) mother's name is Um-e-Walad and is also associated with the names Saqil, Sausan and Narjis and many more..."

Reference:

Tarikh Al-Khameis, 2nd Edition, Page 288, Published Beirut

Imam Ahl-e-Sunnah Allama Sibt-ibn-Jozi's statement:

"Mohammad-bin-Hasan-bin-Ali-bin-Mohammed-bin-Ali-bin-Mosa-bin- Jafar-bin-Mohammed-bin-Ali-bin-Hussain-bin-Ali-bin-Abu Talib (Peace be upon them all). Abu AlQasim is your title and you are the caliph and Imam of the times. Your mother's name was Saqil."

Reference:

Tazkara-tul-AlKhawas, Page 204. Published Egypt

Sheikh Ibn Hajar Al Haishemi Almuki's statement:

Writing about Imam Hasan Al Askari (A.S), Almuki says,"it is said that he (A.S) was martyred by being poisoned, and apart from Abu Al Qasim Mohammad (A.J), had no other sons, who was at the tender age of 5 when his father (A.S) passed away. But Allah (SWT) provided him (A.J) with knowledge, and is known as the awaited savior, for he (A.J) went into occultation and no one knows his (A.J) whereabouts."

Reference:

AlSawaiq Muhariqa, Page 208, Published Multan, Pakistan

Grand Mufti Diyar AlHazarma Abdur Rehman-bin-Mohammed-bin-Husain-bin-Umar AlMashoor Alvi's statement:

"According to Sheikh Iraqi, Imam Mahdi (A.J) was born in 255 Hijri. Sheikh Ali Al Khawas, during his time, which was 958 Hijra, Imam

Mahdi's (A.J) age would have been 703 years. Ahmed Ramli also said that Imam Mahdi (A.J) is real, as Iman Abdul Wahab Sharani has said."

Reference:

Bagya Almustarshdeen, Page 294, Published Beirut

Ahmed-ibn-Yousaf Wa Mushki, also know as Imam Kirmani's statement:

"At the time of his father's death, Imam Abu Al Qasim Mohammed-ibn-Hasan Al Askari (A.S) was five years old. Allah (SWT) granted him knowledge in the same year; same as when Prophet Yehya (A.S) was awarded knowledge when he was young. He had a graceful personality and his face had *nur* on it (These characteristics are the same as mentioned in Hadith books while describing Imam Mahdi (A.J)....

Reference:

Tarikh-Akhbar Aldaul Fi Asar AlAwal, Page 118, Published Baghdad-ul Islam Iraq

Imam Alh-e-Sunnah Allama Al Sheikh Abdullah-bin-Mohammad-bin-Amier Al Shibrawi's statement:

"The awaited savior Imam Al Mahdi-bin-Imam Al Hasan Al Khalis (A.J) was born in Serman Rai, on the 15th of Shaban, 255 Hijra. Five years before his death, Imam Hasan (A.S), due to oppression and tyranny by the rulers, kept the birth of Imam Mehdi (A.J) a secret.

Imam Mohammed's (A.J) titles include Mahdi, Qa'im, Muntazir, Khalif Salih. and Sahib-ul-Zaman, out of which Mahdi is the most famous one."

Reference:

IlaTahaf Behub Al Ashraaf, Page 179-180, Published Egypt

Imam Ahl-e-Sunnah Allama AlHafiz Mohammed-bin-Muhtamad Khan AlBadakhshani's statement:

"Surely your enemy is the one who shall be without posterity." Explaining "*Abtar*" Al Badakhshani says, "*Abtar*" is someone who doesn't have any future hope or posterity.

He then says that "Imam Hussein's (A.S) son was Abu Al Hasan Ali-bin-Al Hussein. Zain-ul-Adbideen (A.S), and his son was Abu Jafar Mohammed AlBaqir (A.S), and his son was Abu Abdullah Jafar Al Sadiq (A.S), and his son was Abu Ismael Moosa Al Kazim (A.S), and his son was Abu Al Hasan Ali Al Ridha (A.S), and his son was Abu Jafar Mohammed Al Jawad (A.S), and his son was Abu Al Hasan Ali Al Hadi (A.S), and his son was Abu Mohammed Hasan Zaki (A.S), and his son is Al Muntazar Abu Al Qasim Mohammed Al Mahdi (A.J)."

Reference:

Nazal AlAbrar, Page 174-175, Published Iraq

Imam Ahl-e-Sunnah Sheikh Momin-bin-Hasan Momin Al Shiblakhji's statement:

"This is about Mohammed-bin-Al Hasan (A.J) (who) is the twelfth. He is Abu Al Qasim Mohammed-bin-Al Hasan-bin-Ali Al Hadi-bin-Mohammed Al Jawad-bin-Ali Al Ridha-bin-Moosa Al Kazim-bin-Jafar Al Sadiq-bin-Mohammed Al Baqir-bin-Ali Zain-ul-Abideen-bin-Al Hussein-bin-Ali-bin-Abu Talib (Peace be upon them all). His (A.J) mother's name is Narjis, and some have mentioned her by "Sausan" and "Saql". Abu Al Qasim is his *Kunyat*, and his titles include Hujatu Mahdi, Khalf Salih, Qa'im, Al Muntazir and Sahib Al Zaman. According to Fasool Al Muhma, he (A.J) is the twelfth Imam in the Aima of 12er Shi'ahs. According to Tarikh-ibn-Alwardi, he (A.J) was born in 255 hijri."

Reference:

Noor-ul-Absar by Allama AlShiblahkhji

Imam Ahl-e-Sunnah Allama Kamal-ud-Din Mohammed-bin-Talha Shafi's statement:

"Abu Al Qasim Mohammed-bin-Al Hasan Al Khalis-bin-Ali Al Mutawakil-bin-Mohammed Al Qamiah-bin-Ali Al Ridha-bin-Moosa Al Kazim-bin-Jafar Al Sadiq-bin-Mohammed Al Baqir-bin-Ali Zain-ul-Abideen-bin-Al Hussein Al Zaki-bin-Ali-bin-Abu Talib (Peace be upon them all). He (A.J) is the awaited savior. His (A.J) mother's name was Saqirah (A.S), and is also mentioned as Hakima (A.S). His (A.J) name is Mohammed. *Kunyat* Abu Al Qasim; titles include Hujat Khulifa Salih, and Al Muntazir."

Reference:

Mutalib AlSaool. Page 89 Published Egypt

Imam Mahdi (A.J) is the son of Imam Hasan Al Askari (A.S)

- The Ahl-e-Sunnah scholar Kamal-ud-Din Abu Salim Mohammed-bin-Talha-bin-Mohammed-bin-Hasan Halabi Shafai. in his book "Mutalib Alsool Fi Munaqib Aal-e-Rasool", has written that Imam Mahdi (A.J) is the son of Iman Abu Mohammed Hasan Askari (A.S) He (A.J) was born at Samrah. Also, in his book, "Dar Munazam", he has said the same thing.
- The Ahl-e-Sunnah scholar Sheikh Aslah-ud-Din has written in "Sharah Dairah" that Mahdi (A.J) is the twelfth Imam of the Aima (A.S). Imam Ali (A.S) was the first Imam and, Imam Mahdi (A.J) being the last.
- The Ahl-e-Sunnah scholar Sheikh Mohammed-bin-Ibrahim Hamoini Shafai, in his book "Fariadh AlSemtein", has copied from Abal Khazai that he narrates from Imam Ali Ridha-bin Moosa Kazim (A.S) that, "After me, my son Jawad Taqi (A.S) would be the Imam, after him, his son; Ali Hadi Naqi (A.S) would be the Imam. The next Imam after him (A.S) would be his (A.S) son, Hasan Askari (A.S), and after him (A.S), the next Imam would be his son, Mohammed Al Mahdi (A.J). During his absence, people who wait for his reappearance, and after his reappearance, people who would obey him would be momihs". The same has been mentioned in Chapter 80.

At least 35 prominent Ahl-e-Sunnah scholars have written 46 books exclusively about Imam al-Mahdi (A.J). the leader of our time. Here are some of the names of some of these books:

1. *"Kitab al-Mahdi,"* by Abu Dawud.
2. *"Alamat al-Mahdi,"* by Jalaluddin al-Suyuti.
3. *"Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar fi Alamat al-Mahdi al-Muntadhar,"* by Ibn Hajar.
4. *"Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman,"* by Allamah Abu Abdullah Ibn Muhammad Yusuf al-Ganji al-Shafi'i.
5. *"Iqd al-Durar fi Akbar al-Imam al-Muntadhar,"* by Shaikh Jamaluddin Yusuf al-Damishqi.
6. *"Mahdi Aale Rasool,"* by Ali Ibn Sultan Muhammad al-Harawi al-Hanafi.
7. *"Manaqib al-Mahdi,"* by al-Hafidh Abu Nu'aym al-Isbahani.
8. *"Al-Burhan fi Alamat al-Mahdi Akhir al-Zaman,"* by al-Muttaqi al-Hindi.
9. *"Arba'in Hadith fi al-Mahdi,"* by Abdul Ala al-Hamadani.
10. *"Akhbar al-Mahdi,"* by Al-Hafidh Abu Nu'aym.

Notes:

¹ According to Shi'a traditions, the Government of Peace and equality that Imam Mahdi (A.J) will establish will last hundreds of years with no rival, and then the Day of Judgment will be set. What is mentioned in the above

tradition as 7 or 9 years is related to the length of time that Imam Mahdi (A.J) will fight to conquer the world when he starts his mission.

² What are inside the parentheses in this tradition are the words of the translator of Sahih Muslim (Abdul Hamid Siddiqui) and are not our comments.

³ Imam Ahl-e-Sunnah Sheikh Yousaf bin Ismael Nibhani says in Jamal-ul-Awaliya. Page 151-152. Publishers Thana Bhum India that "Mohammed Parsa is Bukhari; he is the Imam of Naqashband order and is from reliable historians."



THE END OF DARKNESS

DESPAIR

It is a desert, dark and fearful, No goal for man, no way, no companion, No sun, no candle, nothing is seen, As if he has gone blind. No wise man can he find to ask the way, When suddenly thunder roars tiger-like, And this man presses his ears for fear of the roar of thunder, Then follows a brief lightning, No one by him, no way is found, Darkness and silence, and no hope is left.

It seems as if pain and torture are born with man, for, he has never been free from them throughout history. The apparently sweet

moments of life, too, have been so brief that before tasting their pleasure, he has paid their indemnity by a tormenting pain and a life-consuming calamity. The rise of reformers in history, too, even if it has, sometimes and for a short time, provided some people with tranquility, yet it has been unable to liberate humanity forever from the sanguine clutches of the monster of confusions. A greater disaster is that with the passage of time, man's pains are not reduced, but are increased and intensified.

The progress of science and technology in the present day world too, has not only failed to show a way to freedom; it has also produced fresh difficulties for human society. This lack of harmony between scientific and technological progress on the one hand, and spiritual tranquility of life on the other is on the increase every day and it has reached a point where some western thinkers, such as Ernest Yunger, who live in wholly industrialized countries, express this belief: "Man's perfection and technical perfection are not attainable together, and if we desire one of them, we must sacrifice the other".

The collapse and annihilation of spiritualities have driven the bewildered man of our time, so far that he is prepared to destroy great communities of mankind for the sake of the most trifling things. The pages of human history have never been bloody to this extent, and, at no time, has humanity been so entangled with the defilement of hostility.

The expenditure on military equipment and armament today in various countries of the world forms the greatest item of their budgets. For example, the armament expenditure of 120 countries of the world in 1970 was twenty percent more than the amount spent on education in those countries; and their health and hygiene budget was only forty percent of their military budget.

Today nations, engaging in war, spend yearly sums of billions of pounds sterling preparing to kill human beings.

According to observers:

"The armament strength of the world up to 1961 was capable of destroying the globe twenty times". This ratio has been augmented tenfold today. Up to the same year, international spies in different countries discovered a total of 50 thousand atomic bombs. And today the kinds of bombs made by man are over 2500 times more powerful than the one, which destroyed Hiroshima. He has also made hydrogen bombs for the operation of which only an atomic explosion would be required. It is dreadful that all these destructive forces are able to annihilate the whole of mankind by pressing a button even if it is done by mistake.

Meanwhile, the weak nations of the world, which are exploited by the strong, are faced with such problems as poverty and hunger, so much so that today we see three quarters of the world population confronted by the monster of poverty and hunger. And since this large group of oppressed people is a threat to the interests of exploiters,

those who hold power have assigned some funds for the so-called "combat with poverty and hunger" but really to preserve themselves and silence the protesting groups. But it must be remembered the said funds amount only to one-fiftieth of the expenditure incurred on drinks and cigarettes consumed in their own countries.

Today in order to solve such problems as poverty and hunger, war and class conflicts, man takes refuge in various ideological schools, but after some time he finds these, too, either an accomplice of such misfortunes, or unable to combat them. Therefore, in a state of total helplessness and despair, he gazes at the dark world to seek a sign of a lightning, which would set fire to that blackness and save man from all this gloom.

The project of the United Nations seemed to be such a light which, in the gloomiest and most ominous period, namely after the deadly blows of the two World Wars on human society, shone in the minds of thinkers and reformers. And as the wounds inflicted on the body of the nations by the two Wars were still fresh, the leaders of various countries in the world took steps for the establishment of this organization due to the fear of occurrence of a third World War.

At first, most people supposed that a final solution had thus been found for deliverance from difficulties, but the hope in this organization was short lived. From the very beginning the powers, which should have committed themselves to the observance of the international laws and their non-violation, reserved for themselves the

right of committing every kind of crime on the pretext of the right of "veto". After a short time it became clear that this organization, too, was nothing but a dazzling formality, for, these were only the weak nations which were, in fact, duty-bound to carry out its regulations.

The failure of the United Nations Organization to solve difficulties, owing to the lack of guarantee of execution, once more revealed the fact that neither plundering countries feel any pity for poor and hungry nations, nor is their own satiety to their interests. Neither are expansionist governments willing to abandon their military bases in weak countries, nor do they divide such countries peacefully between themselves. Also neither does there exist a basis for their educational programs, nor does the propagation of education and people's awakening in the interest of big powers. As a result, neither was the United Nations Organization able to remove the danger of great nuclear wars, nor could it save mankind from the clutches of poverty and hunger, nor solves man's mental problems.

With this failure of the United Nations, the last aperture of hope too was closed for mankind, and man began to be convinced of the futility of all hopes as well as the futility of the world. To escape from this bitter fact man either turned to suicide or retired from society. Thus, the present-day human being is, in utmost despair, waiting for death to be released from this painful and burdensome life.

Will a nuclear war destroy the whole mankind? Is three-quarters of the world population condemned to death because of

poverty and hunger? Will narcotics eventually annihilate the human race? Will the days of man's misery never come to an end and will he never be liberated from this hopeless life? Will a day not come when poverty is uprooted from human society? Can a solution be ultimately found to do away with all this confusion of human societies and put things in order? Will man be able one day to find a way towards his ideal life? Will this despair give way to a future, which is full of hope coupled with equality and brotherhood? Will a day not come when human-looking beings, which are true animals, put aside their beastly vices and start a pleasant life based on human virtues and fine qualities and service to their fellow-creatures? Is there any hope in future?

HOPE

Most thinkers and reformers believe that the only solution for putting the present world in order is the establishment of a single world government based on justice. Undoubtedly in order to check mutual clash among the great powers of the world for the sake of expanding their spheres of influence over weak nations. Also to abstain from the destruction of large masses in the way of securing greater profits, to remove the problem of poverty and hunger which has been caused solely for the sake of pillaging the wealth of the weak by the strong. And finally to take a step towards liberation from difficulties so that people, do not, in despair, resort to narcotics in order to forget their wrong notions about the futility of the world and

all efforts and hopes. It is essential that a government based on justice and authentic human values must take over the reins of affairs of the whole world. It should unite all mankind into a single nation, and distribute all wealth equally among human beings, fully control the military power of the world, and place genuine human culture at the disposal of all.

Bertrand Russell, the great Western thinker and philosopher, says in this connection:

“There is only one way to prevent war, and that is by setting up a single world government which could solely control all the great and important weapons. In my opinion if such a world government is set up, its establishment will be met with agreement and satisfaction in some parts and must be effected by conquest in other regions. I do not suppose that the human race possesses such an ability and statesmanship to submit to the establishment of a world government willingly and wholeheartedly. That is why I think that the use of force and pressure is necessary at the outset for its establishment and preservation.”

Thus, a great obstacle in this way is the lack of adequate force to stand against the factors, which start war and create other disorders. Today the great powers of the world are in the hands of a group of selfish profiteers in whose minds the only question that does not arise is to forsake their own chances in favor of mankind and to set up a single world government on the basis of justice. For this reason in

order to attain such an ideal, it is necessary to have a well-informed and virtuous leader who would rise with an immense power against these forces of oppression.

The presence of such a leader has long been felt by mankind for the establishment of a society based on justice, and therefore, various peoples and nations have spoken of, such a religious leader in some form or other. The Hindus call him "Brahmin Kala"; Celtic groups name him "Arthōur"; Zoroastrians name this savior "Socianes"; the Jews call him "Joshua"; and the Christians "Masih" and Muslims give him the title of "The Reformer" and "Al Mahdi [A.J]".

Evidently enough, an individual, whose most important program is to combat super-powers and to break up the organization of rioters, should have a power superior to that of all others. So that he is able to remove them all in the shortest possible time, and set up his wholly just rule in the world. Such a person cannot attain his goal unless he is supported by divine power. And for this reason he has been considered by all religions as an individual selected by God, and they have presented a picture of him and his program, and with the lessening of time between these religions and the rise of that reformer, his picture has become more vivid.

Accordingly, the Muslims are unanimous that in future a man of the Holy Prophet's [S.A.W.A] household, who bears the same name, as he will rise by divine command, will establish a single world

government with a solid basis of brotherhood and equality. And will put an end to all inequalities and human miseries.

The Qur'an portrays the future most clearly in the following lines:

"God has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them rulers on the earth as He make rulers those before them, and that He will most certainly establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them, and that He will most certainly, after their fear, give them security in exchange: they shall serve Me, not associating aught with Me."

The Shi'a traditions and narratives have given the following description of Mahdi's [A.J] program:

"He will continue his armed combat until the total annihilation of oppressive governments. He will be aided by combatants and by the fear that God creates in the enemy's heart. As a result, he will not turn to any land without hoisting the banner of Islam there. In this way, he will conquer the east and west and will set up a single world government on the basis of justice. Under his leadership of the Islamic world society, human beings will be able to attain mental growth and acquire the highest levels of knowledge and insight. Then the most perfect moral values will rule the world and under their auspices, unity and purity will be established among human beings. He will divide the wealth equally between people and abolish all class differences, that everyone will have the possibility of activity and progress.

Consequently, the world will enjoy such a degree of wealth and prosperity that people will have no need of seeking profit in their dealings, and consider such an action as undesirable as usury."

To be brief, all human societies, particularly the Muslims, are awaiting for a bright future in which there is no fear and terror, no riot and confusion, no poverty and hunger, and no sorrow and misfortune. It is this hope and expectation that have been able to preserve human society so far against total destruction, and protect them against the danger of drowning in this wild and stormy ocean, by sticking to a wooden plank until they reach the safety of a ship.

EXPECTATION

The Shi'a expectation is one, which rouses ardor and motivation, and gives hope and life. It is this hope that has not only helped the dynamic Shi'a society to proceed in its motion in spite of intense oppositions and intolerable sufferings, but has also been an inspiring factor in its advance. This expectation has been the key to its survival and progress. It would be fitting to remove the rust of superstition from this human-nurturing and epic-making principle. So as to show what expectation it is that turns a numb nation into one full of fervor; a dispersed society into a well-organized one; despondent beings into joyful ones; distracted travelers into a steadfast group; violent humanity into a tranquil community; and a futureless history into a history-making morrow.

To become acquainted with the true meaning of this principle, the best authorities to refer to are Shi'a leaders. Imam Sadiq [A.S] says:

"Those who live in the expectation of the establishment of the government of the concealed Imam are like those who serve under him, or even like swordsmen in Mahdi's retinue. Nay, I swear to God that they are like martyrs who have offered their lives in the company of the Prophet."

This profound utterance defines the lofty role of expectation, showing that true expectants, like believers at the advent of Islam, should rise resolutely and fervently against the paganism of their time, and endeavor heroically to the extent of martyrdom in preparing the masses to accept a divine and human order.

In this context, another utterance of the same leader throws light on our silence and inactivity, and calls us to the constructiveness of society by saying:

"He who is awaiting for our order (meaning government) is like one who is plunged in his own blood in the way of God."

And we see in the objective-pursuing argument of Imam Reza [A.S] the remark that: "The expectation of relief is a part of relief." We realize that an informed Shi'a should act during the period of expectation as if it were the time of Mahdi's [A.J] advent. Thus, we understand from the meaning of expectation the depth and worth of this remark that "The loftiest act of my followers is the expectation of relief."

For the same reason, if the fiery epic of expectation is understood properly and introduced to anxious masses, it will result in

the blossoming of their young tree of life, so that they would, with a fervent mind and a firm resolution, make a great effort to build up a bright future.

To clarify this point further, you may think of a large army the commander of which owing to a wise necessity, leaves his headquarters, and announces to his army that the time of his return is not certain, but that they should all be ready for fighting, because, on his return, he will issue the order for assault, and begin a victorious war. The alert and capable soldiers, on receiving this instruction, keep themselves always ready to engage in combat with vice and wickedness waiting for the arrival of the commander and the issuance of his order.

The insolence of the enemy and the large size of its number during this period, make the soldiers more determined to fight, and even though they are waiting for their commander with tearful eyes, zealous hearts and prayer-whispering lips, they do preserve their ability to combat wrong and falsehood. Such a vigilant and alert group never thinks of dispersion and taking things easy until the commander returns to put the affairs in order. Or let him fight alone to give it victory, or make a personal endeavor to grant itself benefits, or let him enter the battlefield to place the crown of honor on its head, or let him die so that it could live eternally!

It is obvious as to what the consequence of such an attitude would be, and that is why it is said: "A nation that is awaiting for a

reformer must itself be honest" The uprising of the Shiites on hearing the name of Mahdi [A.J] also means being ever ready for his call in order to offer their lives in his way. This preparedness trains them for combat to such an extent that if death, which is the ultimate end of all, separates them from Mahdi [A.J]; they beg God to bring them back from their graves. And at the time of the reappearance of the Imam, all ready with battle shroud and drawn swords and spears to rush to the aid of Mahdi [A.J] in towns and villages.

If the Shiites have not been exhausted in the ups and downs of their life span of fourteen centuries, and in the course of the combat with evil, and have constantly entered battlefields as self-sacrificing soldiers ready for every effort to fulfill human ideals, one of its factors has been this positive expectation.

We see that unlike those who seek their glory in past history, true expectants always look upon a bright future and proceed towards it, for; true expectation changes the direction from the past to future.

Briefly, if the Shi'a expectation is a true one, and if our understanding of this principle is a genuine one, then we must be honest, and do our utmost, by constant efforts, to fight falsehood, to prepare the ground for Mahdi's [A.J] uprising. And to acquire the ability for taking part in the last battle in his presence, and in this way look forward, with all our heart and soul, to his advent.

SAVIOUR

For such an expectation it is necessary to have an exact knowledge of the promised figure. So that we could not mistake him with the dolls of the puppet-shows of the powers that sing a new song every day in order to break up and destroy the wonderful epic of expectation, nor could the extravagant talks of ignorant and self-interested people cover up this matter with a veil of superstitions, and thus change our hope into despair, and our longing into defeat.

He is the twelfth and last leader, the son of Imam Hasan Askari [A.S], born in the middle of the month of Sha'ban of 255 of the Hijra. His fine mother was Narjis [A.S], a Roman lady who was converted to Islam and had become Imam Askari's [A.S] wife.

The true and great Shi'a leaders have, on sorrowful occasions, given their friends the tidings of his advent. When Imam Hasan Mojtaba [A.S] was compelled to make peace with Mo'avieh and was reproached for it by some people, he offered several reasons for the correctness of his deed, of which superficial people were ignorant, and said:

"Did you not know that there is no Imam of ours who is not forced to show allegiance to the arrogant men of his time except the concealed and awaited Imam behind whom Jesus performs his prayer? Then, as God indeed conceals his birth and hides him from people so that, on his reappearance, he could owe allegiance to no one, know that he is the ninth offspring of Hussein, my brother's generation, and son of the noblest slave-girl. God will give him a long life in his absence and then, by His might, He will let him reappear as a young man under forty in order to show that God is mighty in everything."

Since it was God's will that Mahdi [A.J] should be secure against enemies' harm and be able in future to carry out the great plan of setting up a single world government based on justice. He disappeared from public view, when in 260 of the Hijra, Imam Askari [A.S], his father, suffered martyrdom, and he had performed the prayer rites for his father's corpse. The reason is that the tyrannical Abbasid Caliphs knew, on the strength of the tidings given by the prophets [A.S] and previous Imams [A.S] that he would break up the whole system of the wicked based on oppression and crimes. So they were seeking his death, and after the above-mentioned burial ceremony, they rushed to his house to kill him.

He was hidden from public sight for seventy years from that date onward, and only the select Shi'ahs of the Imam [A.J] were allowed to meet him, and explain the difficulties experienced by themselves and others. Those men were given the name of the select deputies' in Shi'a history and this period of seventy years was called 'the short absence'.

At that time when some wicked individuals thought of communicating with the Imam [A.J] for the purpose of misleading the people, the Imam [A.J], in a letter in his own handwriting delivered by his fourth deputy, announced the question of deputy ship and declared all communication with himself terminated until his reappearance.

In this period, which is called "long absence", the Imam [A.J] lives incognito among people. And as it is mentioned in Shi'a

traditions and narratives he walks about markets, steps on people's carpets, and they see him without recognizing him. Whereas he sees and recognizes them, and this state is considered similar to that of Joseph [A.S] and his brothers. for the people saw Joseph a ruler of Egypt and talked with him, but were unable to recognize him, while Joseph knew them all.

In this period, Imam Muhammad-bin-Hasan [A.J], in cases of need, defends the religion as an ordinary individual and solves the difficulties of the Shi'ahs and whenever necessary, he introduces himself to a trustworthy Shi'a who can guard a secret and issues orders to him. It is a belief in these helpful acts of Imam Mahdi [A.J] that gives the Shi'a a remarkable courage, and by reliance on such assistance, they resume their fearless combat against falsehood howsoever strong it might be. This state reminds one of the saying of Imam Ali [A.S] who says:

“By reliance on the presence of the Prophet in the hardest moments of the battle, we did not withdraw from the scene and continued to fight till victory was won.”

During the period of Imam's [A.J] absence, the Shi'a act to receive religious edicts in the same way as in the periods when other Imams [A.S] were living. This means that similar to the time when the Imam [A.J] sent for them an honest scholar and expert in religious matters to submit their questions to him and learn their duties from him. While most of them never met the Imam [A.J] even once in all their lives, in his absence, too, the Shi'ahs are duty bound to approach

their religious scholars who are protectors of religions, never follow their whims and fancies, and only obey God's commands given in the Qur'an and tradition.

But, on his [A.J] advent, all human beings follow the religion of Islam, Prophet Muhammad's [S.A.W.A] faith and the Book of God, and act on the instructions issued by Imam Mahdi [A.J]. To explain this point further, we refer to the following words:

The Prophet [S.A.W.A] says about Mahdi's [A.J] uprising:

"A time will come when Islam is left only in name and the Qur'an becomes a mere formality. Then God will permit him to rise up and with his assistance, Islam will be strengthened and renewed."

Imam Ali [A.S] the first Imam of the Shi' as, says:

"The concealed Imam will, on his advent, offer Islam to people and calls upon them to follow it."

Imam Baqir [A.S], the fifth leader of the Shi'ahs, says:

"The concealed Imam will begin his task at Mecca, and will seek people's allegiance on the basis of faith in the Qur'an, the Prophet's ways, his own guardianship, and dislike of his enemies."

He says also:

"In the government of Mahdi no one remains without having joined the followers of Muhammad."

It is under the auspices of this program that Islam, which has been forgotten, and the Qur'an, which has been laid aside, will be brought back to the people's life. The society will be built up on the basis of the Qur'anic injunctions; a new life will be given to Islam and

Muslims, and the glorious rule of the Qur'an will be revived. And this greatness will be so noticeable that the people will find it hard to believe that they have attained that sublimity through the Qur'an which they possessed. Imam Sadiq [A.S] says about Imam Mahdi's [A.J] program:

"Mahdi will do what the Prophet of God did, that is, he will do away with the existing innovations in the same way that the prophet destroyed paganism, and then he will rebuild Islam."

Therefore, as the other Imams [A.S] did not introduce a new religion, but only revived and strengthened Islam. Imam Mahdi [A.J], too, will act as Imam on the basis of Prophet Muhammad's [S.A.W.A] religion. And will not even hide his belief against enemies for the sake of a greater expediency, but he will declare his mission openly from the very outset. According to the words of Imam Sadiq [A.S], hiding one's faith will not only be forbidden for him but also for all his followers at the time of his advent, because such a covert act is required in difficult circumstances or in the eventuality of any damage to Islam, and these factors will be non existent since his advent is the beginning of relief and ease.

Reflection about the question of absence clarifies certain facts, the way to realize which is the Imam's [A.J] absence in itself. For example, the only way to reform those individuals who preferred their whims to the logical reasoning of the prophets concerning the necessity of following religion. Or created or adhered to various schools of thought and ideologies in spite of the clear utterances of the

prophets about the inability of man in the matter of legislation, is to practically prove this fact that man-made schools of thought produce nothing for mankind. They only create confusion and distress, and if someone seeks happiness, he should obey the orders of the prophets. Moreover, those who, in spite of clear evidences and signs, lose their identity in the face of knowledge and suppose that knowledge can replace faith, should discern this point that knowledge acts only as a means, and the mode of its utilization should be determined by religion, otherwise it may cause the greatest damage to mankind.

The period of the Imam's [A.J] absence is the phase of leaving man to himself, so that by not following nature and reason, experience proves to him that human society is always in need of divine guidance. As the leaders of Islam have declared, the advent of Imam Mahdi [A.J] takes place at a time when the majority of human beings wholeheartedly desires divine guidance to be liberated from the disorders and confusions that have been created by itself. And seeks the establishment of a society on the basis of the Qur'anic laws. That is why we see that there is a constant increase in the number of thoughtful beings who are aware of the need for religion and admit it.

In addition to the above matter, during this period of absence, the Shi'ahs are tested for their steadfastness in religion. As this period is long, and infidelity may dominate faith. And add to the commitment of sins and oppression, as well as indulgence in carnal desires, the Shi'ahs are subjected to a constant trial so as to differentiate between

those who verbally claim to be believers while in comfort, and those who are true believers.

We find both these points concerning the subject of Mahdi's absence in a brief utterance of Imam Sadiq [A.S] who says:

"This matter - the Imam's advent and uprising - will not take place until after despair of finding happiness through man made schools of thought or by virtue of the victory of Islam on account of the lengthy wait. Nay! I swear to God that it will not come until you believers are separated from hypocrites. By God, it will not come until the miserable become truly miserable, and the happy truly happy."

He says also:

"As the absence period is long, only one group remains steadfast, and a group of other people say 'He is not yet born! Others say: "He was born and then died" Some say: "The eleventh Imam had no offspring." Others commit sin by saying "The Imam is incarnated in another body and then speaks."

This question may arise that if the reappearance of Imam Mahdi [A.J] takes place many centuries after his father, Imam Askari [A.S], why, then, was he born in the lifetime of his father to remain unidentified for such a long time? In response, we must point out that according to the Shi'a belief, which is based on the utterances of Islamic leaders, the world never remains without evidence. Namely, in every era, there must exist a perfect human being who has known God in the most perfect way, and has obeyed and worshipped him in the worthiest manner.

Imam Ali [A.S] says:

"The world will never be devoid of evidence, whether it is known or unknown."

Also Imam Sadiq [A.S] says:

"If there are only two people left on the earth, one of them will be the evidence."

"If there were no evidence of God, the earth and its inhabitants would be destroyed."

Thus, we see that the world never lacks evidence. But according to the utterances of the Prophet [S.A.W.A] and Imams [A.S], the twelve Imams [A.S] present the evidence of God next to the Prophet [S.A.W.A] himself. As an example, an utterance of the Prophet [S.A.W.A] is quoted below, saying:

"Indeed, the deputies and evidence of God after me are twelve people, the first of whom is Ali and the last is Mahdi."

In view of the above two points and also the fact that history gives the exact details of the life and death of these Imams [A.S], there is no alternative but that after the eleventh Imam [A.S], there should exist Mahdi [A.J] as God's deputy. Henceforth, to show the continuity of existence in the world. Moreover his program requires preliminaries, some of them mentioned before, for which the passage of many centuries would be necessary, and thus Mahdi [A.J] must have a long life.

It, therefore, becomes clear that the need for evidence and continuation of the world's existence, and the fact that there remained no deputy but Mahdi [A.J] after the decease of Imam Hasan Askari [A.S], leave no alternative but Mahdi [A.J] as living evidence on the earth after his father's death. And until the time he (the Mahdi) reappears.

Another point, which may seem obscure, is the life span of several centuries of Mahdi [A.J] as stated in various traditions and narratives and considered as one of Mahdi's [A.J] characteristics.

As an example, we will quote a few of the words of the Shi'a Imams related to this matter.

Imam Sajjad [A.S] says:

"In Imam Mahdi, there is a quality of Noah and that is the length of his life-span"

Imam Reza [A.S] says about Mahdi [A.J]:

"He is of a long age and has a young face, and an observer may take him for a man of forty or less and another sign of his is that he does not grow old until God's command is issued."

To clarify this matter, it should be remembered that if we recognize God to be All-Powerful. Every difficult and extraordinary thing is possible for Him if He desires so. And in view of the role of Mahdi [A.J] in human history, which is the consequence of the ceaseless endeavor of the prophets, it is reasonable to believe that God will keep him young and powerful until Resurrection time.

Moreover if we regard this matter scientifically, we realize that the present-day knowledge does not only not fix a limit for human life span, but what it considers natural is very a long life. If we are witnessing the short life of human beings, it is due to the fact that man is not aware of the mechanism of his existence and does not know its proper use. Consequently he is every moment faced with great losses, which damage his body and spirit. Therefore, with the advance of

knowledge and man's greater awareness of his own mechanism, his life span has continued to increase. This is clearly shown by age statistics of human beings.

As an example, in England the average age of men between the years 1838 and 1845 had been 39.91 years, and that of women 41.85 years. In 1937, the average age of men had risen to 60 and that of women to 64. Similarly, in America in 1901 the average ages of men and women were respectively 48 and 51, while in 1944 these had gone up to 63.5 and 69 [and continued to do so].

Learned men of today have discussed the longevity of human beings in different ways, some of which are given here as example:

The German scholar, Weisman, says:

"Death is not necessarily a law of nature, and in the world of nature, there is eternal life as well as a momentary one. What is natural is an everlasting life. In our own time, man's life span has increased, and there is no reason why it should not continue to rise and allow a human being to live nine centuries."

Yuri Fialkov, professor of technology at Kiev in the Soviet Union, says:

"An Atom which forms the basis of matter is eternal and is never destroyed by itself provided it is not done so by outside forces. The cell, too, which is the basis of living creatures is eternal on condition that it is duly fed and is not destroyed by extreme cold and heat."

He says also:

"Man should live forever and never die, for, a living cell is eternally alive."

Jean Rostand, the well-known biologist, says:

"I admit that there exist natural factors of aging in a human being, but many of the bodily cells are not destructible, and it is not right to say these eternal cells assemble to create a mortal body."

Attention to these matters shows that modern knowledge does not only reject the idea of a long life span being incompatible with the mechanism of creation of man, but also regards a short life as unnatural.

History, too, is a true testimony of man's length of life, and tells us of those who have lived long, such as Noah, Elias and Methuselah, as well as others mentioned in other books. In our own times we have heard of ages several times that of ordinary life spans such as a 207-year-old man of south America, [In Iran] Sayed Abu-Taleb Musari Farsi who lived for 101 years; Muhammad Baqir Oghlu of 184 years; Shir Aliov of the Caucasia 168 years of age; Hatın Nin, a Turkish woman of 168; Luisa Trosko, a woman of 175; Teps Abzip of 180; and Sayed Ah Kutahi of 185.

The only point that remains is the small number of people with a long life. But it must be remembered that the rarity of matter is not an evidence of its impossibility in the same way that geniuses rarely

appear, but this does not mean the absence of great talents of such men as Edison, Einstein etc.

Thus, the question of Mahdi's [A.J] life-span, in addition to its being the wish of God and in view of His absolute might, and therefore practicable, is also possible from the viewpoint of modern knowledge as is confirmed by various testimonies.

The above discussion shows that the world is in need of a savior and awaits him. This expectation, in its most genuine form, figures in Shi'ism as a revolutionary principle, and the leader of an Islamic world government, who will rule the world on the basis of the Qur'an and traditions, is none but Muhammad [A.J], son of the eleventh Imam [A.S] of the Shi'ahs, who was born in 255 of the Hijra, and lives incognito amidst people, He has been given a long life by God in order to reappear when the world is ready for the rule of the Qur'an, take over the world affairs and fight oppressors.

CONSPIRACY

Destructive and evil powers for which the epic of expectation is a disrupter of their injustices and plunders have always continued to forge Mahdi [A.J] looking puppets. So as to get rid of this history-making and revolutionary idea and turn the warm hope of the masses for a bright future into despair.

The appearance of these actors in the big power's puppet-show did not only fail to find a remedy for human anxieties, or change

destructive wars into joyful tranquility, or put an end to the tragedy of hunger, poverty and worry. But all those miseries also increased and added to human sorrow.

As an example, we will deal here with one pseudo-Mahdi namely that of Mirza Ali Muhammad Shirazi, to show that there is nothing in common between these claimants and the true Mahdi [A.J].

He was a son of Mirza Reza Shirazi, born in 1235 of the Hijra, in Shiraz and his mother was called Fatima. In his youth, he studied Islamic subjects at Najaf and Karbala. And these studies were undertaken from the viewpoint of the Sheikhia who believes that, at all times, there exist individuals as intermediaries between Imam Mahdi [A.J] and people. After the death of his teacher, Sayed Kazem, he claimed to be his successor and set up the creed of Babiism, and a few of the Sheikhia followed him.

His claim coincided with the years of internal riots and turmoil in Iran, and with the blows dealt with by colonizing countries, especially the Czarist Russia. In that period of hardship, the people heartily welcomed the tidings of Islamic leaders, and more than any other time, longed for the advent of Imam Mahdi [A.J] to liberate them from their sufferings. When Mirza Ali Muhammad declared that he had been nominated by Imam Mahdi [A.J] to prepare the preliminaries for his advent, some simpletons and ignorant people, hoping for this advent of the Imam, gathered round this man, and called him Bab (i.e. door) which led to the Imam's threshold.

As the Czarist Russia thought of him as a proper means of breaking up the united ranks of the Shi'ahs against itself, it gave him a free hand on the principle of "divide and rule", and helped him to propagate his ideas. His followers were sent to various parts of Iran to convert people to Babiism, and there were started riots so as to engage Iran's military forces in suppressing this confusion, while the colonizers could easily secure what they desired.

As Mirza Ali Muhammad realized about people's interest in his claim, he made a still greater claim to declare that he was Imam Mahdi himself, forgetting that those who had gathered round him were believers in Imam Mahdi [A.I.], and his second claim showed that his first one, too, had been nothing but a demagogic act.

But as he was indulging in the pleasures provided for him by the Russian Government through Manouchehr Khan Gorji, Governor of Isfahan who was of Russian origin, and as he (Ali-Muhammad) had taken as true the promises of the Governor about the conquest of Iran in the war with Muhammad Shah, compelling people to follow him and placing huge amounts of money at his disposal, he insolently declared: "I am Imam Mahdi whose advent had been promised to people."

When the people realized that his name was not Muhammad, and he was not a son of Imam Hasan Askari [A.S.], Nor was his mother the Roman Narjis, nor a descendant of the disciples of Jesus [A.S.], nor the date of his birth 255 of the Hijra, nor his life a lengthy one like that

of Noah [A.S], nor was he hidden from public view, they abandoned and opposed him. Among the opponents could be seen two of his former followers who were praised by him in his books, and whose conversion to Baha'i sect he took as a sign of the authenticity of his claim.

But he was not content with this. And some time after, by writing two books called '*Bayan-e-Farsi*' and '*Bayan-e-Arabi*' he issued a verdict on annulling Islam and claiming his own Prophethood, and declared that the Qur'an was no longer a book to be followed by people, and offered his own book in its place.

This contention was another proof of his false claim, for, the people knew that according to the leaders of Islam, Mahdi [A.J] would not introduce a new religion and, like the other Imams [A.S], would propagate the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad's [S.A.W.A] faith.

But this man who thought only of winning his masters' satisfaction, and obeying what they commanded him, went so far as to declare himself 'God'. And said: "Indeed Ali Muhammad Shirazi is God and is the reality of His existence." And thus offered the seekers of truth the most futile testimony of his claim.

It is interesting to know that this same Mirza Ali Muhammad who passed through the stages of claiming Babiism, Imamate, Prophethood and godhood, in the year 1264 of the Hijra which coincided with his declaration and the ensuing riots in various parts of Iran, at a meeting held in Tabriz in the presence of the then crown

prince, Nassereddin Mirza, to investigate that claim, was given lashes. The prince then wrote to his father, Muhammad Shah: "This man has given a written and sealed pledge that he would no longer commit such improper acts." And after this lashing, he was exempted from further punishment by those present owing to the probability of his mental instability.

Abol-Fazl Golpayegani, the well-known Baha'i missionary, has quoted, in his book "*Kashfol-Gheta'e*", a letter written by Ali Muhammad Shirazi to the crown prince, Nassereddin Mirza, at the same meeting begging for pardon. Abass Afendi, titled Abdul Baha, who is another leader of Babiism, has seen this book, shown much appreciation of it to Golpayegani and ordered its publication.

This letter is as follows:

"My life is for you, God and he who are with him witness that this humble servant has no intention to act contrary to the satisfaction of the God of Universe and His deputies, even though my existence is wholly sinful. If I have let my pen write words contrary to His satisfaction, my intention has not been to rebel, and in any case, I am penitent and beg His forgiveness. This humble servant has no knowledge at all that would justify a claim. I beg God for forgiveness and repent any matter attributed to me. If certain words and benedictions have been uttered by me, these are not the proof of anything, and I deny being a special deputy of Imam Mahdi and I never claim this or any other matter."

This letter is the best evidence of his inconsistency with the program, and with the armed combat of Imam Mahdi [A.J] that would continue until the total destruction of oppressors. In this context, Imam Mahdi [A.J] and his followers are never permitted to correct their faith, let alone expressing repentance!

We discover the real motive for this event when we see that on his being hanged in 1266 of the Hijra for his note, the Russian consul presented himself beside the corpse together with some painters to prepare a valuable document and evidence of a sacrifice as a martyred soldier in the service of the Russian government, namely that of Mirza Ali Muhammad Shirazi!

As God always provides the best evidence of the falsehood of liars by their own hands. So as to convince all people, we see in the works of Mirza -Muhammad Shirazi the sacred name of Imam Mahdi [A.J] mentioned repeatedly, especially in his writings before his claiming Imamate. Such as his "Commentary on Chapter Yusuf", "Commentary on Chapter Baghara" "Commentary on Chapter Kauthar" and other commentaries, as well as his books like "*Dala'el Sab'at*" and "*Sahifa Adlia*" in which he explicitly speaks of Muhammad-ibn-Al-Hasan [A.J], and has even given reasons for his long life and absence.

As an example, we quote some sections from his book "*Sahifa Adlia*":

"Thirdly there is the knowledge of Doors (Chapters). There is a duty here to confess to the guardianship of Ali, Commander of the

Faithful. Fourthly, there is the matter of knowing Imamate. There is the duty here for all beings to know the twelve holy Imams who are deputies of absolute guardianship. Here are their sacred names: Al Hasan bin Ali, Al-Hussein bin Ali, Ali bin Hussein, Al Hasan bin Ali, and the concealed Imam Muhammad bin Hasan, the lord of the time."

Thus, this man has considered it a duty to believe in the Imamate of Muhammad-bin-Hasan [A.J] after Imam Hasan Askari [A.S]. This point is asserted elsewhere, too, as the following quotation from his book:

"The prayer given in the fifth Chapter includes all the phases of belief, and it is, by itself, sufficient for faith."

And in the same Chapter we note this:

"I testify to the successors of Muhammad, namely Ali, Hasan, Hussein...then Ali, then Hasan, and after him the lord of the time and Your treasure... I testify, too, that the concealed Imam who belongs to these twelve, greetings, is my rightful Imam."

So Mirza Ali Muhammad considers testifying to the Imamate of Muhammad-bin-Hasan [A.J] as a requisite of true faith, and expresses his testimony to that Imam in the same manner. It is interesting that he writes at the conclusion of the same book:

"Indeed, all the points mentioned in this book are my beliefs in God. I have lived with them, and I shall die with them by God's command, and shall rise with them by God's will on Resurrection Day.

I testify, too, that Ali Muhammad, in all matters, is the servant of the Reminder of God."

After this brief investigation, we return to the original topic, and remember that the world is awaiting for Muhammad bin Hasan [A.J] to reappear by God's command, and act as a leader in defense of truth for the last combat with evil and its total destruction. We must remember also that our duty during his absence is to prepare the environment for his advent. Therefore, we should start his program of combat with falsehood within our own ability and limit, and beg God Almighty to make us worthy of a true expectation and to witness his advent. Now that the human world is despairing of finding a remedy for its sufferings and distresses, we should await in this dark night for the bright dawn of Mahdi's [A.J] uprising, gazing at the hope-inspiring horizon, and uttering the following prayer:

" O God, our hope and longing in You are to grant us the blessed government of Imam Mahdi [A.J], and in that government grant Islam and its followers honor and greatness and abase hypocrisy and its fellows, and grant us the glory of the life in this world and the life hereafter. "



Praying For The Early Reappearance Of Imam Mahdi (A.J)

Compiled By: Z.O'Doibhilin

Imam Hasan al-Askari (A.S) said,

*"By Allah they do not truly wish for his reappearance, and do not attain salvation. Except those, whom Allah the High and the Mighty, has made firm upon the sayings of their Imams, and gave them the tawfee'q (opportunity) to pray for the hastening of the reappearance."*¹

¹ Kamaaluddin vol.2 Pg.384

Imam Mahdi (A.J) says:

*"And pray more for an early reappearance. For certainly, in it, is your success."*²

O Allah! Do not let out faith regarding the Imamate of Hadhrat be destroyed due to his prolonged Ghaibat and due to the fact that we do not know where he is. Do not leave us in a condition when we do not remember him, nor await him, not have faith in him and in his reappearance, nor do we pray for him and nor send blessings upon him.

O Allah! It should not be that we despair of his reappearance due to prolonged ghaibat. Make our belief as firm as the belief in the announcement of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A), his announcement and the revelation from You and the Book (Qur'an) sent by you!

O Allah! Make our hearts firm upon the belief in him that we can achieve guidance only through him and continue to tread the straight path.

O Allah! Impart us the strength to follow him. Keep us steadfast in his obedience. Include us among his followers and among those who help him, support him and those who

² Kamaaluddin vol.2 Pg.485, Ghaibat-e-Toosi pg.292-293

are pleased with what he does. Do not deprive us of the honor of his guidance in this life or at the time of death. We should meet death in such a state that we must not have any doubt about this exalted personality. We should not have any misunderstanding nor we be among those who disbelieve in him.

O Allah! Hasten the time of his reappearance. Help him achieve success and victory. Help his supporters and debase and destroy his enemies. Amen. O the Lord of the Worlds.

